BRILL'S COMPANIONS TO THE BYZANTINE WORLD

A COMPANION TO THE BYZANTINE CULTURE OF WAR, CA. 300–1204

Edited by
YANNIS STOURAITIS

BRILL

A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, ca. 300-1204

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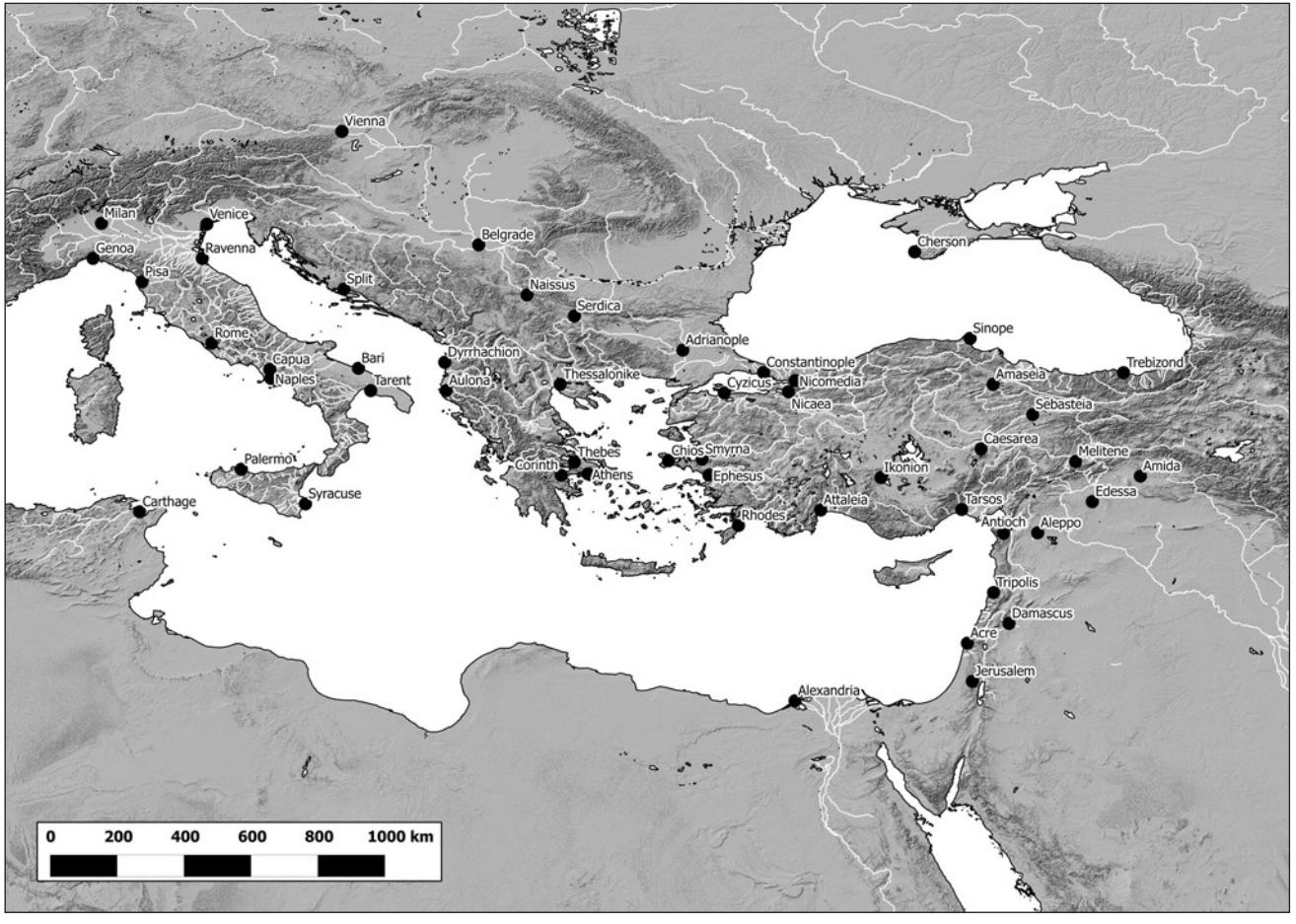

MAP 0.1 The Eastern Roman World.
MAP DESIGNED BY DR JOHANNES PREISER-KAPELLER

INTRODUCTION

Military Power in the Christian Roman Empire, ca. 300-1204

Yannis Stouraitis

> Don't allow your army to be broken up or to become poor, or you will become poor yourself, and consider yourself very wretched. The army is the glory of the Emperor, and the power of the palace. For, if there is no army, the *state* (Treasury) cannot stand firm, but anyone who wants to will by all means oppose you. Endeavour, at all times (to see) that the fleet grows, and that you have it at full strength; for the fleet is the glory of the Roman realm.[1]

⁂

These lines from the late 11th century so-called *Strategikon* of Kekaumenos, a treatise written by a Byzantine magnate of Asia Minor, probably provide the best point of departure for an introduction to the topic of this volume. To begin with, the author's reference to the current realm of Constantinople as *Romania* makes it clear that the reference to a *Byzantine* culture of war in the title of the current book has little to do with an effort to take sides in a latent modern historiographical debate on where Rome ends and Byzantium begins.[2] Kekaumenos' solid belief in the continuity of the Roman imperial order in the 11th century demonstrates that "Byzantium" as a *terminus technicus* is – as with any other periodicizing concept – *de facto* arbitrary and, therefore, has very little historical value, irrespective of its analytical purpose.[3]

1 Kekaumenos, *Consilia et Narrationes*, ed. and transl. Charlotte Roueché (Sharing Ancient Wisdoms/SAWS, 2013), p. 101.

2 In modern scholarship, the term Byzantine Empire is employed either to designate the Roman Empire from the reign of Constantine I onwards or, more often, the Eastern Empire from the sixth century onwards. For two different takes on this issue, see indicatively Stathakopoulos, *A short history of the Byzantine empire*, pp. 2-3; Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium*, pp. 96-98.

3 Cf. Každan/Epstein, *Change in Byzantine culture*, p. 1.

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As a result, the conceptualization suggested here, of eastern Roman military affairs from the 4th to the 12th centuries as *Byzantine* is intended to serve concrete analytical goals in the context of our topic. First, it aims to clarify that the focus of this book will be on the East; that is, on those parts of the Christian Roman Empire that were under the centralized authority of the imperial city-state of Constantinople, alias New Rome. Second, it is intended to suggest a different perspective regarding periodization that puts the continuity of a politically united and centralized social order at the epicentre. In other words, it will focus on the role of military power and warfare in the endurance of the centralized imperial rule of Constantinople over a fluctuating realm from the foundation of the city by Constantine I in 330 up to the irreversible political disintegration of the eastern Roman world in the wake of the Fourth Crusade (1204).

So – to return to the passage cited initially – Kekaumenos' utterances are useful because they spotlight the crucial role of military power in the longevity of the Roman imperial system in the East. In an insightful manner, the Byzantine general presents the existence of the high-medieval East Roman state, i.e. the fluctuating borders of the imperial power's enforceable authority,[4] as relying on the emperor's ability to maintain firm control over a strong army that secured his advantage against anyone willing to resist his power. That this statement was equally meant to refer to the army's role in defending the frontiers of the empire as well as in circumscribing the relationship between the imperial centre and the provinces in the interior is made evident by two things:

– Kekaumenos employs the word *demosios* to allude to the *state*. This term literally translates as fiscal authority, i.e. the Treasury, in Byzantine terminology, and its use here pinpoints the interdependence between the imperial office's concentrated military power and centralized control over tax revenues.
– In another part of the text, the provincial magnate demonstrates his awareness that a rebellion against the emperor was difficult to succeed due to the evident military superiority of the imperial office.[5] This awareness fully corresponds with the fact that the majority of internal armed conflicts in the imperial realm in the period between the 4th and the late 11th century was

4 Haldon, *The state and the tributary mode of production*, pp. 32-34; cf. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 56-62, esp. p. 57. On the distinction of ideal types of the state between modern infrastructural and pre-modern despotic, see Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State", pp. 113-116.

5 Kekaumenos, *Consilia et Narrationes*, ed. Roueché, pp. 64-76.

predominately caused by rebels aiming at the usurpation of the imperial office, and had ended with the reigning emperor as the winner of the conflict.

In this respect, Kekaumenos' approach to the role of organized military power in his own society provides a straightforward answer to the socio-historical question as to whether the eastern Roman social order could have endured as a politically united social order without standing imperial armies, paid for and controlled by the centre of imperial power. If the Roman Empire had come into being due to the capacity of its legions to re-organize socio-political structures in newly occupied territories, the longevity of the imperial system was grounded on two basic features that had crystallized during the time of the Principate. The first was the integration of provincial elites into the Roman political order, i.e. the process of full-scale Romanization of leading elements of the subjugated populations. The second was the imperial office's monopoly of control over military power. This was crucial not only for the defence of its frontiers against foreign threats, but also for preventing provincial secession from centralized rule. These basic features of the Roman system of territorial empire, i.e. of a vast Roman imperial state, from the 1st century CE onwards, continued to underline its function in the medieval eastern Roman Empire after the 5th-century collapse of centralized rule in the Western parts, where the process of migration of Germanic peoples led to the gradual emergence of a post-Roman world of ethnic regna.[6]

The extensive territorial contraction of the east Roman realm in the period between roughly the late 6th and the late 7th century transformed it into a mini-empire compared to the Roman realm under the autocratic rule of Constantine I or to Justinian I's restored empire of the mid-6th century. Even in its outmost territorial expansion during the early 11th century, the medieval realm of Constantinople would never come anywhere near close to past glories regarding its territorial size. Moreover, the medieval Roman elite underwent a transformation into mainly being an elite of service highly dependent upon the imperial office for titles and revenues.[7] Even though the basic structure of a hierarchical and centripetal imperial community was maintained, one could plausibly argue that, if the Late Roman Empire had mainly been an agglomeration of self-governed cities, in the wake of the radical transformation of the late-antique urban landscape, the imperial realm of Constantinople was transformed into an agglomeration of large territorialized military commands by

6 Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*; Heather, *The fall of the Roman Empire*; Halsall, *Barbarian migrations and the Roman West*.

7 Haldon, "Social Élites, Wealth, and Power", pp. 179f.

the early 8th century. In the initial phase, these were large areas of assignment (*strategiai*) of the military forces of a *strategos* (general) in Anatolia, along with some smaller commands in the few remaining Western outposts. From roughly the early 9th century onwards, these developed into *themata*, smaller administrative and military units under a military commander.[8] From the late 10th century on, the latter were subordinated to larger commands named *doukata* or *katepanata*.[9] These underwent significant changes after the radical territorial contraction in the East in the late 11th century.

The transition to an apparently more militarized model of society has plausibly been associated with the urgent need to confront the swift expansion of Islam in the course of the 7th century. For roughly one century (640s to 740s), the Muslim armies threatened the very existence of Constantinople's realm, whereas the Caliphate continued to represent the empire's major rival up to the late 10th century, thus playing an important role in the configuration of its medieval image. Nonetheless, the socio-political traits of the process of militarization in the interior need to be revisited in the light of the latest research findings regarding the so-called *themata*-system. The revisionist approaches to the older theories about a mid-7th century imperial reform, according to which the *themata* were introduced as new military and administrative units, demonstrate that one also needs to revisit those older historiographical schemes which promoted, implicitly or explicitly, a romantic interpretation of the fundamental role of the thematic forces, as quasi-national armies of peasant-militia, in the empire's survival.[10]

Current wisdom emphasizes the continuation of the late Roman military and administrative structures during the period of the Muslim expansion, and points to a process of gradual change in eastern Roman military structures. This process was triggered by the shock of defeat and the territorial contraction in the East in the mid-7th century. Nonetheless, it was informed by the principles of Roman statecraft, i.e. of centralized imperial authority, when it took the form of well-directed reform measures by the emperors from roughly the mid-8th century onwards. These measures reveal the imperial power's concern to maintain control over standing field armies of full-time (professional) recruits. This means that, if the 7th-century process of militarization refers

8 On these developments, see Zuckerman, "Learning from the enemy and more" 125f.; Cheynet, "La mise en place de thèmes", pp. 1-14; Brubaker/Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, pp. 723-755, esp. 744f.

9 Kühn, *Die byzantinische Armee*, pp. 123-69

10 Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 106; Ahrweiler, *L'ideologie politique*, pp. 29-36.

primarily to the revived role of the army and high-ranking military officers, the *strategoi* – as the main bearers of imperial authority in the provinces – in political affairs,[11] it cannot be simply explained as the outcome of an emergency reaction to Islamic expansionism. It also needs to be analysed in the broader context of the function of military power as a central organizational means in the system of empire.

If one looks at the development of the 7th-century crisis from the late 630s onwards, the localization of defence as well as the localization of recruitment in the areas of assignment of the *magistri militum* with their armies in Asia Minor were processes that went along with an evident regression of Byzantine efficiency on the battlefield. The radical regression of state-revenues due to the loss of Egypt and the eastern provinces seems to have had a negative impact on the quality of equipment and the efficiency of a significant part of the provincial forces in the period from the late 7th to the late 8th centuries.[12] More importantly, though, these processes led to a tendency towards decentralization of power within the imperial system in the context of regionally-focused defence. They *de facto* provided the generals that commanded the regional armies with much more space for autonomy in regard to both control over their forces as well as over the revenues of the latter's regions of assignment, and in part also of their warring activity.

If these developments point to a loosening of those structural conditions that enabled the imperial office to maintain firm control over superior military power, one needs to ask why this did not cause the collapse of the imperial system in the face of tremendous external pressure from the Muslim foe roughly between the mid-7th and the mid-8th centuries. The first answer that comes to mind is, of course, the complete ideological adherence of the Romanized provincial elites of Asia Minor to the vision of empire, which had been decisively underpinned by the homogenizing religious discourse of Christian monotheism since the late 4th century. Despite the evident decentralization of military power between the mid-7th and the mid-8th centuries, the loyalty of the Anatolian military elite to the imperial office of Constantinople led the generals to make use of their soldiers' loyalty to their person only to reproduce the system of empire by rebelling as usurpers against the reigning emperor – not to seek the system's disintegration through secession.

However, an overemphasis on the role of an operative ideology or, for that matter, common identity, religious or political (or both), as the main factor that determined the survival of the imperial system would only provide a

11 Haldon, *The Empire that would not die*, pp. 147f.

12 A good overview of these processes is given in Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 11-41.

reductionist – and therefore incomplete – explanation.[13] The role of a religious proto-ideology that underpinned the role of the institutional charisma of the Roman imperial office of Constantinople in keeping the empire together should, of course, not be underestimated. What seems to have played an equally – if not even more – important role, though, is the very nature of the enemy that threatened the existence of the imperial system from without. The character of the Muslim offensive, which was incrementally informed by an apocalyptic religious ideology of "holy war"[14] and which is usually regarded as one of the principal reasons that should have caused the empire to collapse, should rather be seen as one of the main reasons that forced the military elites in Anatolia to stick together and maintain their loyalty to the centralized rule of the imperial city-state of Constantinople.

Both the crisis of the 5th century in the western part of the Roman Empire as well as that of the long 12th century in the core territory of the Byzantine Empire in Anatolia represent useful examples of the opposite case that can help us make the aforementioned point clear. A macro-structural approach to both cases indicates that the foreign enemy did not appear in the shape of an emerging centralized imperial culture that pursued a frontal clash with the Roman order in order to knock it down and replace it with a new one. The infiltration of migrating peoples in the 5th-century West and Turkish groups in 11th-century Anatolia respectively – albeit with their evident differences – equally refer to phenomena of penetration and destabilization, both in military-territorial as well as politico-cultural terms,[15] of two imperial orders that were witnessing internal structural tensions. Thus, the collapse of centralized imperial rule was brought about rather as a process of transformation which – as violent as it may have been – occurred as the combined result of the imperial office's diminishing military power as well as of the enemy's ability to permeate the established order and create conditions of coexistence and/or fusion with existing power structures at a regional level. This process left space

13 Cf. the latest comprehensive analysis in Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die*, pp. 79-158.

14 Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, pp. 19-25; Blankiship, *The End of the Jihād State*, pp. 11-23.

15 On the process of so-called 'barbarization' of the Roman army in the Empire, see Liebeshuetz, *Barbarians and bishops*, pp. 7-85. On the political and cultural coexistence of Turks and Romans in Asia Minor from the late11th century onwards, see Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, pp. 202-15; Ducellier, *Chrétiens d'Orient et islam*, pp. 260-75; Balivet, *Romanie byzantine et pays de Rûm turc*, pp. 30-39, 47-53; Balivet, "Entre Byzance et Konya", pp. 47-79; Necipoğlou, "The Coexistence of Turks and Greeks in Medieval Anatolia" 58-76; Beihammer, "Defection across the Border of Islam and Christianity", pp. 597-651; idem, *Byzantium and the Emergence of Muslim-Turkish Anatolia*.

for local bearers of power to be partly accommodated either within the emerging new power structures or beside them in a new power-political context.

Conversely, the Muslim offensive of the 7th century – especially in its form after the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty from 661 onwards – referred to a rising imperial power's endeavour to eliminate the Christian-Roman order in order to replace it. The vision of imposing the Koran's uncompromising monotheism under the centralized rule of the successor of the Prophet, the Caliph, dictated a process of subjugation and substitution, instead of penetration and transformation, of existing orders as the swift conquest and disintegration of the Sassanid Empire had made evident. Even though the early "Community of the Believers" had a tolerant attitude towards other monotheistic populations, thus facilitating the swift accommodation of the eastern – largely Monophysite – Christian monotheists under the rule of the first three so-called orthodox Caliphs,[16] its territorial expansion was a process of violent military conquest aiming at the elimination of neighbouring political orders.[17] Integration into the early Muslim political order meant that the members of the local elites in the conquered provinces should either abandon their places, or stay and – as a rule – accept accommodation in the new religious-political system with a marginal or subordinate social and political position.[18]

If the latter process was facilitated in the eastern provinces by the recent experience of Persian rule, which had contributed to the regression of the local elites' belief in the inevitability of Roman rule and had caused a renegotiation of their bonds with the political centre of Constantinople,[19] the case was not the same with the elites of Asia Minor. These had longstanding vested interests in the centralized Roman imperial system and were predominately Trinitarian Christians, that is, bearers of a monotheistic identity that was even less compatible than that of Monophysites or Jews with uncompromising Muslim monotheism.[20] Moreover, the conditions of the military clash after the mid-7th century between two centralizing systems of rule with superior military power made any attempt at provincial secession from Constantinopolitan authority on the Anatolian periphery doomed to fail. This reality left the members of provincial elites – especially the military elite – in the empire's Anatolian

16 Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, pp. 106-118.

17 Hoyland, *In God's Path*, pp. 63-64, 135-6.

18 Hoyland, *In God's Path*, pp. 158-61.

19 Whittow, "The late Roman/early Byzantine Near East", pp. 94-95.

20 On resistance to the Islamic expansion, see Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die*, pp. 159-214.

territorial core with little alternative but to remain loyal and seek to defend their status by defending the empire.

Therefore, for the Byzantine success in stopping the Muslim advance in Asia Minor, besides other factors – such as issues of changing military tactics on the Byzantine side as well as political dissension within the Caliphate roughly from the mid-7th century onwards – one needs to consider the role of the nature of the Muslim threat in eliciting a higher level of socio-political cohesion and loyalty in the course of the conflict, thus contributing to the preservation of Constantinopolitan control over Asia Minor.[21] It follows that the nature of the Muslim offensive should be seen as both a cause for the emerging decentralization of military power within the imperial system between the mid-7th and the mid-8th centuries, and a crucial factor that counterbalanced this intrasystemic tension. In this period, provincial elites – in particular the generals of the settled provincial armies – may have found themselves in an advantageous position compared to the power elite in Constantinople in terms of political and military power within the system of empire, but the Muslim threat led them to use this advantage almost exclusively towards the defence and reproduction of this system.

By comparison, the process of regression of centralized control over the largest part of Anatolia in the late 11th century was the combined result of two things: on the one hand, internal political-military dissension and tendencies of decentralization impaired the imperial power's potential to reorganize properly its military forces and maintain a centralized hold on the territory and its revenues, in particular after 1071. On the other, it needs to be related to the nature of the Turkish penetration, the primary phase of which had begun already since the 1140s on the eastern frontier. The Turkish settlement was not the result of a frontal offensive by a rival centralized imperial order that aimed to knock down the empire of Constantinople.[22] The various Turkish groups – even though they were under the nominal overlordship of the Seljuk sultan – penetrated Anatolia individually, partly also as allies of Byzantine magnates in the latter's conflicts over the throne, and took advantage of the central power's military weakness in order to establish a number of autonomous principali-

21 The same can be said, to a certain extent, for Kushrō II's war of annihilation against the empire in the reign of Heraclius (610-641). On this war see the detailed account in Kaegi, *Heraclius*, pp. 58-191.

22 On the process of Turkish interpenetration of Byzantine territories and socio-political structures, see Beihammer, *Byzantium and the Emergence of Muslim-Turkish Anatolia*, pp. 169-304.

ties there.[23] As a result, the Seljuk settlement became one of the main factors that contributed to the escalation of the phenomenon of provincialism and separatism in the course of the long 12th century. The role of this process in depriving the imperial office of important revenues and human resources – as the main means for maintaining strong field armies – pinpoints the interrelation between centralized control over superior military power and the maintenance of provincial loyalty to the imperial office of Constantinople, i.e. to the system of empire. In this period, the incremental tendency of Byzantine provincial magnates to defy the rule of Constantinople and create semi-autonomous or autonomous regimes in their regions was facilitated by the mediocre military strength of both the imperial office as well as the Turkish principalities, its main enemy in Anatolia.

The comparison attempted here between the Arab-Muslim and the Seljuk invasions on a macro-structural level – even though it hardly does justice to the complexity of these diverse and multifaceted historical phenomena – is intended to spotlight the dialectic relationship between military power, intrasystemic contradictions and external pressures in a medieval social order circumscribed by the political discourse of empire. It is in this context that one should seek to approach the development of medieval Roman military structures from roughly the mid-8th century onwards. The first well-directed military reform of this period, the reorganization of the imperial regiments (*basilika tagmata*) under Constantine V (741-775) sometime around the mid-8th century,[24] was principally associated with internal affairs and had little to do with the war against the Muslims. The emperor's initiative to reinstitute an elite force of two regiments (*scholae*, *excubitores*) under his direct command and to divide the *opsikion*, the military command in Constantinople's Asiatic hinterland, into three minor commands was the first response of the imperial office to the aforementioned process of decentralization of military power since the mid-7th century. This process had nearly cost Constantine V his throne due to the revolt of the military commander of the Opsikion Artabasdos shortly after he had succeeded his father Leo III.

The reconfiguration of an elite force directly attached to the imperial office had many implications. Given that this was initially an arithmetically rather small corps and, therefore, could not campaign individually against the enemies of the empire, its primary purpose was to circumscribe the loyalty of the

23 Cahen, "La première pénétration turque en Asie Mineure" 5-67; Beihammer, *Byzantium and the Emergence of Muslim-Turkish Anatolia*, pp. 198-243.

24 The first mention of the *tagmata* in the sources refers to the year 765; on this reform see Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 228f.

provincial armies. By creating an armed force under the direct control of the imperial office, the emperor ensured that, if one of his generals decided to attempt a rebellion of usurpation, he would not be exclusively dependent on the interests and loyalty of the other generals and their armies in order to defend Constantinople and his regime. Nevertheless, if this reform originally stemmed from Constantine V's need to readjust the internal political scene in terms of dynastic stability (i.e. to discourage movements of usurpation against him), in the long run it was meant to have a major impact on the endurance of the eastern Roman imperial system.

The timing of the reform coincided with the end of the so-called "jihad-state" in the Caliphate through the transition of power from the Umayyad to the Abbasid dynasty and the transfer of the capital from Damascus to Bagdad.[25] By ending the period of Muslim onslaughts against Constantinople – a conducive development for the transition of the clash between the Empire and the Caliphate from a war of annihilation to a frontier conflict of attrition – the fall of the Umayyads triggered a process that gradually led to the decentralization of power within the vast Caliphate. It follows that Constantine V set in motion a policy that aimed to restore the imperial office's centralized control over superior military power in the interior, when the intensity of the Muslim offensive began to wane and a process of destabilization of centralized rule in the Caliphate was about to set in. From that time onwards, the gradual regression of Muslim superiority on the battlefield would go along with military measures that aimed at reinstating the military supremacy of the imperial office within the imperial system.

The imperial *tagmata*, apart from their leading role in the implementation of imperial policies in the interior, acquired incrementally the role of an elite force on the battlefield. The rising importance of these units is reflected in the effort of the emperors that succeeded Constantine V to maintain firm control over them by adding new units to the initial two. In this context, it is of particular importance that emperor Nikephoros I (802-811) who introduced a fourth unit (*Hikanatoi*), thus giving the imperial regiments there final shape, was the emperor who founded the so-called thematic system.[26] A better understanding of the qualitative traits of the military reform that this emperor instigated needs to take into account that he was keen on having his power rely on elite units of full-time recruits. This is further demonstrated by the relocation of the regiment of the *foederatoi* from the command of the *Anatolikon* to the capital during his reign.

25 Blankiship, *The End of the Jihâd State*, p. 3.

26 Haldon, "A context for two 'evil deeds'", pp. 245-266.

Nikephoros I – an experienced court official before his rise to the throne – introduced a fiscal measure that made the community of the village, as a fiscal unit, collectively responsible for supporting its recruited members that could not bear the cost of military equipment. This reform was obviously intended to deal with the problem of providing the army with well-equipped recruits – a persistent problem since the 7th-century crisis that had influenced the efficiency of the provincial armies on the battlefield. It follows that the emergence of the so-called theme-system in the course of the 9th century was the product of a well-directed fiscal reform concerning the system of centrally controlled recruitment. The principal motive behind this reform was not to create an army model of part-time peasant-militia bound to the defence of their region. It was rather to ensure the financial viability of well-equipped recruits in the provincial armies. This is made evident by the instructions concerning recruitment to the thematic forces provided in the Tactica of Leo VI. This military treatise was written at the start of the 10th century when the thematic system had taken its full shape after a series of consequent actions in this direction by successive emperors during the course of the 9th century. According to the author of the text, the general of the *thema* should recruit his men only from well-off households registered for military service, because these men would be capable of devoting themselves full-time to soldiering.[27]

The consistent reorganization of imperial territories into *themata* by the emperors of the 9th century, which multiplied the number of generals and commands in Asia Minor in comparison to the older system of the *strategiai*,[28] points to another important power-political aspect of this reform. The upgrading of the administrative role of the general in the region under his military jurisdiction concluded the process of the imperial administration's militarization. At the same time, however, it decisively reduced the individual military power of the commanders of the provincial armies. Constantine V's initiative against the tendency of decentralization of military power in the mid-8th century was taken a step further by the emperors of the 9th century and was completed through the fragmentation of all large military commands (*strategiai*) into smaller *themata*. These were now administrative units in which the general disposed political authority as well.

In light of this, one could plausibly argue that the 9th-century thematic reform was the climax of a reforming process that had started in the mid-8th

27 Leonis VI Tactica, IV 1, ed. G.T. Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI*: text, translation, and commentary, Washington, D.C. 2010, pp. 46, 5-11.

28 On the division of the empire in numerous thematic units by the late 9th century, cf. the table in Haldon, *Warfare*, p. 86.

century. The main political rationale behind this process was to increase the imperial army's efficiency on the battlefield as well as to restore the imperial office's strong hold on superior military power within the system of empire, as the main organizational means that circumscribed its coherence. By shrinking the individual military power of provincial generals in the course of the 9th century, the imperial power consolidated the leading role of the imperial *tagmata* and other emerging elite units under the direct control of the power elite in Constantinople. This meant that the charismatic power of the imperial office was once again guaranteed from within the system of empire in a period when the process of disintegration of centralized Muslim rule in the vast Caliphate was reaching its climax. At the same time, a class of landowning magnates was taking its full shape out of the Byzantine elite of service in the provinces.[29]

As a result of these developments, the empire was stable and militarily strong enough again from the late 9th century onwards to antagonize and gradually to supersede its Muslim rival as the dominant military power in the Eastern Mediterranean. In the interior, the leaders of the imperial *tagmata* – usually the *domestikoi* of the *scholai* who often headed the whole imperial field army on behalf of the emperor – became main bearers of political power alongside the leading officers of the imperial fleet. These high-ranking officers were mostly members of the provincial landowning families that claimed a share in the hegemonic Roman power discourse through their leading positions in the army.

The fact that access to military power was mainly a matter of proximity to the emperor and the court in Constantinople circumscribed the relationship between the imperial office and the landowning provincial elite. This is made evident if one takes a look at the large-scale civil wars caused by members of the landowning military aristocracy during the 10th century. These were mainly aimed at the usurpation of imperial rule, not at secession from the imperial state. The rebels were able to materialize their plans only due to their offices that provided them with access to the imperial system's military resources, the standing field armies; not as independent warlords relying on their own economic power and human resources.

Within this framework, 10th-century imperial legislation for the protection of small landowners – in particular those with a hereditary obligation of military service – pinpoints the emergence of a new intrasystemic threat to the system's balance. The concentration of landed property in the hands of provincial magnates, many of whom were members of the elite of service, did not

29 See Haldon, "The army and the economy", pp. 136-38.

provide them with individual means – in particular personal military retinues – that could counterbalance the military resources of the imperial system. Nonetheless, it threatened potentially to undermine the fiscal foundations of centralized recruitment. The so-called powerful (*dynatoi*)[30] that usually enjoyed a privileged status of tax exemptions were in position to buy off the land of small independent peasants. Moreover, such impoverished peasants often sought the protection of a landlord in order to avoid the heavy burdens of centralized taxation.[31] In the long term, this threatened to reduce the economic resources through which the imperial power was able to finance standing imperial armies of full-time recruits and foreign mercenaries.

The normative aspect of the legislation for the protection of small landholders reflects, therefore, a developing stand-off between the landowning elite of service and the imperial office, which threatened the preservation of centralized control over the extraction of surplus. The recurrent promulgation of relevant laws in the course of the 10th century indicates that the imperial power was hardly in a position to implement such legislation effectively. It follows that it was not legislative measures but rather expansionary warfare that provided a temporary solution to this emerging intrasystemic tension. The revenues of reconquered areas in the East and the Balkans widened the central government's base of tax-resources. The case of the *kouratores* in the eastern provinces points to the imperial power's concern to secure direct control over the revenues of newly acquired regions.[32]

The imperial office's thriving economic resources continued to guarantee the loyalty of standing armies of full-time indigenous and foreign recruits and, as a result, to circumscribe the imperial throne's charismatic appeal to the powerful members of the military elite. The large-scale civil war between the leading army officer Bardas Phokas and emperor Basil II (987-989) is indicative. The rebel was clearly in command of the largest and stronger part of the indigenous field army units and controlled a large part of Anatolia, when he set out to occupy Constantinople and the imperial throne. The emperor was in a position, however, to use the resources of the imperial treasury to hire a strong mercenary force of Varangians. This action proved crucial for the final

30 Morris, "The powerful and the poor"; Neville, *Authority*, pp. 68-9, 79f.

31 Kaplan, "The Producing Population", p. 152.

32 On the debate as to whether the *kouratoria* referred to a system that turned land in the reconquered regions into crown estates or whether they referred to a new administrative position that guaranteed the collection of tribute for the imperial office in these regions, see Oikonomidès, "L'évolution de l'organisation administrative", p. 137; Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre*, 316f.; Howard-Johnston, "Crown Lands", pp. 75-100; Holmes, "How the East was won", p. 47.

outcome of the civil war in his favour. Thereafter, the Varangian guard became the imperial office's main elite force – an imperial guard of foreign mercenaries loyal to their employer, the emperor of Constantinople.

It is in this light that the slow process of disintegration of the imperial system that set in from roughly the mid-11th century onwards should be examined.[33] The older mainstream thesis attributed the loss of Anatolia to the Turks to the deterioration of the thematic armies of part-time peasant militia and their replacement by standing field armies of mercenaries (mainly foreign, but also indigenous). This approach overlooked the fact that mercenaries, i.e. full-time recruits, were in principle more efficient than peasant-militia on the battlefield.[34] Moreover, it hardly appreciated the evidence showing that it was the re-organization of standing armies of full-time recruits that had made the empire militarily powerful again in the previous centuries, thus facilitating the large-scale expansion of the 10th century. All this indicates that the loss of Anatolia in the aftermath of Mantzikert (1071) to various Turkish groups cannot be attributed to the decline of the army-model of peasant-soldiers. In the same way that the conspicuous failure of the Arab armies to accomplish the same goal four centuries earlier had nothing to do with a centrally-directed reform that created such an army model.

In this regard, the role of the so-called thematic system as the alleged backbone of the empire's survival and revival in the Middle Ages needs to be re-evaluated soberly. In the 7th century, the well-directed withdrawal and dispersal of the imperial armies in Anatolia by the emperors of the Heraclian dynasty created a solid military network of in-depth defence, which in combination with other factors eventually stopped the Muslim advance. The establishment of the *themata* in the course of the 9th century maintained and strengthened the in-depth aspect of the military organization by institutionalizing the system of regional/local recruitment. It was out of this reform that the standing field units of the provincial *tagmata* emerged from the early 10th century onwards. By the end of this century, the new military-administrative units of *doukata* or *katepanata* relied on joined field armies from the imperial and the provincial *tagmata*. This system adopted an outward (offensive) focus by removing the bulk of the empire's military forces to a broad frontier zone.[35] The result of these developments was a growing military marginalisation of the thematic units in the empire's interior that led to the negligence of the structures of local recruitment there. Moreover, the new system relied more on

33 Haldon, *Warfare*, pp. 90-93.

34 Haldon, "Approaches to an alternative military history", pp. 69-70.

35 Oikonomidès, "L'organisation de la frontière orientale", pp. 73-90.

the individual ability of the head of the army and his subordinates for the successful defence against large invading armies.[36]

In this context, the civil war over the throne that followed the battle of Mantzikert (1071) was conducive for Constantinople's failure to reorganize its standing forces and concentrate them on regional defence in the aftermath of a defeat that had by no means disintegrated the imperial army.[37] As a result, the imperial office gradually lost control over a large part of the Anatolian core territory, its revenues and human resources. This gave birth to a vicious circle in the years to come, since the reduced military power of Constantinople did not allow for a rash restoration of imperial control over the lost core areas. This determined the moderate military potential of the imperial city-state of Constantinople throughout the 12th century. The main bulk of the Komnenian imperial armies were elite units of foreign mercenaries. The latter were incrementally complemented by some indigenous units from the late reign of Alexios I Komnenos onwards as well as by the retinues of the imperial family's relatives and clients. The imperial office's need to retrieve the necessary military power in order to face the Turkish danger triggered the emergence of the crusading movement in western Europe.[38] Alexios I's diplomatic quest for contingents of foreign knights that would help him repulse the increasing Turkish pressure and restore control over Asia Minor unleashed an expansionary vision of "holy war" in the West, which proved a major threat to the Byzantine imperial system in the long-term.

The inherent contradiction of priorities between the Byzantine political vision of restoring imperial authority in Asia Minor and the Crusader vision of re-conquering Christianity's Holy Land determined the course of the First Crusade and the emergence of the so-called Crusader States in the East. Even though the empire took advantage of Crusader advancement in Anatolia in order to recover its authority over parts of western and southern Asia Minor, the re-stabilization of the imperial system took place in a new geopolitical context, in which the mini-empire of Constantinople was constantly under pressure from both the Turks in the East and the Normans in the West. The recurrent Crusades to the Holy Land posed a threat to the empire's security while the Crusader States undermined the Byzantine emperor's position as supreme Christian ruler in the East.

Within this framework, the consolidation of the so-called Komnenian system enabled the Constantinopolitan power elite to remain faithful to the

36 Haldon, "Approaches to an alternative military history", pp. 62-65.

37 Cheynet, "Manzikert", pp. 412-34.

38 Shepard, "Cross-purposes", pp. 107-29; cf. Frankopan, *The First Crusade*, pp. 87-100.

Roman imperial tradition that determined the priorities of its internal and foreign policies.[39] The creation of a new ruling elite consisting of the relatives and the clients of the Komnenoi family counterbalanced the fact that, contrary to the previous period, imperial *rogai* stopped being the main means that bound the members of the ruling elite to the imperial office. The extended Komnenian network of kinship alongside the imperial office's control over standing forces of foreign mercenaries secured temporarily the relative cohesion of the imperial system insofar as a competent warrior-emperor held the throne. The first three Komnenian emperors managed to keep movements of provincial secession under control due to their ability to lead the army personally to success on the battlefield. Moreover, they conducted small-scale expansionary warfare in East and West, which was equally directed against Christian and non-Christian enemies. It was reasons of imperial ideology and power politics that second-ranked the goal of re-conquering the whole of Anatolia from the infidel Turks.

The short power vacuum after Manuel I's death (1180) and the consequent turmoil caused by Andronikos I Komnenos' short reign were conducive for the further weakening of the imperial office's diminishing military power and charismatic appeal. This triggered the culmination of the phenomenon of provincial secession in the last quarter of the 12th century. The Angeloi emperors did not manage to keep the centrifugal forces under control in the face of increasing pressures from both the Turks in Asia Minor as well as the Normans and the Crusaders from the West. The sack of Constantinople by the armies of the Fourth Crusade in 1204 was the climax of a long and multifaceted process that determined the imperial system's irreversible disintegration. It may rightfully be asserted that this event marked the end of imperial Roman-ness as an operative ideology that had circumscribed the political unity of large parts of the Eastern Mediterranean under the centralized rule of the Roman imperial office since the time of Augustus.

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39 Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, pp. 228-266.

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PART 1

The Mentality of War

∴

CHAPTER 1

The Imperial Theology of Victory

Paul Stephenson

The last Roman emperor, now remembered as the last emperor of Byzantium, Constantine XI, died fighting to prevent the capture of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks under their 21- year-old leader, Mehmed II. Mehmed's epithet, Fatih, "the conqueror" preserved the memory of his greatest achievement even as he cast himself in the role of successor to the Roman emperors. His destruction of the tombs of past rulers at the Holy Apostles' Church, allowed for the placement of his conqueror's mosque, the Fatih Camii, on that site. At the same time his rival, Constantine, became a symbol for the loss of empire. It was imagined that he could not simply have died fighting, but instead was petrified in his warrior's pose and preserved outside of time, the "Marble Emperor", waiting to return as liberator of Christians and restorer of empire. An Ottoman tale reports quite the opposite, that he was beheaded and his head nailed to the base of the column that held the *bakır at*, the "bronze horse" which was regarded with particular suspicion by the Turks as a talisman of the Christians. The Turks held that the horse's rider pointed out at them in a mocking fashion, as once it had towards the Persians. Therefore, it is no surprise that Mehmed II wished it to be known that he had melted down the statue, along with Christian bells and crosses, to forge cannons, which would be directed against Christians during the siege of Belgrade in 1456.[1]

The bronze horse in question was the famous equestrian statue of Justinian (527-65), which in around 533 had been raised high on a column in the Augusteion, looking down upon the hippodrome and pointing to the East. Justinian was depicted holding an orb, a symbol of his ecumenical power, and wearing a peacock-feathered tiara, the *toupha*, which was adopted from Persian triumphal regalia. According to one account, the statue was cast to celebrate

1 According to Asikpaşazade, cited by Raby J., "Mehmed the Conqueror", pp. 305-13, at 309. That Mehmed II had been responsible for the statue's removal, but not its destruction, is clear from Pierre Gilles' account. Gilles (II. 17), who made a meticulous study of the city during four years in Istanbul, identified in 1544 a colossal bronze statue of a horse rider in pieces, recently removed from the palace "where it had been preserved a long time", and which was now being melted down for ordnance. He saw a man's leg and nine-inch nose, and the legs and hooves, also nine inches long, of his horse.

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Justinian's victory over the Persians from captured arms and armour, as an epigram revealed: "The bronze from the Assyrian spoils moulded the horse and the monarch and Babylon perishing. This is Justinian, whom Julian, holding the balance of the East, erected, his own witness to the slaying of the Persians".[2] The forging of a victory monument from spoils had ancient precedents. Following the Battle of Actium, Octavian's victory at sea over the forces of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, Octavian had the bronze prow mounts of his enemies' ships melted down and formed into four bronze pillars, which he erected in Rome, on the Campus Martius. These were later transferred to the Capitoline by Domitian, and were seen by Servius in around CE 400. Far earlier, the Plataian Tripod was forged from the arms and armour of Xerxes' fallen Persians into three entwined serpents supporting a golden cauldron. The column, now known as the Serpent Column, was transferred to Constantinople, where it was reinterpreted for and by Christian observers in the hippodrome. Justinian's statue was different, however, in taking the form of the emperor himself. It made the Christian Roman emperor the very embodiment of victory.

The Christian Roman emperor, or Byzantine emperor, struggled to maintain exclusive possession of victory, and his monopoly was particularly threatened when, like Justinian, he did not lead his own armies. But many Byzantine emperors did lead armies, and those that went to war between *c*. 300 and 1204 will be the focus of this essay. It is a highly selective essay, focusing on episodes that allow us to identify the vehicles for and symbols of imperial victory, the perceived potency of which changed over time relative to each other and according to the nature and magnitude of the threat that the empire faced. It proceeds from the premise that the Byzantine emperor presided over a branch of the Christian faith that was fundamentally Old Testament in tone, operating according to the model of David, as a priest-king who was the object of divine choice, whose right to rule was established by victory in war.[3] This was emphasized especially after the 7th century, and Middle Byzantine emperors were frequently compared to or portrayed as David, Moses or Joshua, whereas earlier other models prevailed.[4] Classical, especially earlier Roman models remained important, both for emperors and, even more so, for those who wrote about

2 *Greek Anthology* XVI. 62 and 63.

3 This is a fundamental conclusion of Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, from which I have drawn inspiration in the past, in Stephenson, "Imperial Christianity and Sacred Warfare in Byzantium", pp. 81-93. For engagement and criticism of this premise and far more, see now Stouraitis, "'Just War' and 'Holy War'", pp. 227-64. Also, the collected papers in Koder J./Stouraitis, *Byzantine War Ideology*.

4 Rapp, "Old Testament Models for Emperors in Early Byzantium", pp. 175-97.

their exploits in war. This essay begins, therefore, in the later Roman or early Byzantine period, to establish the framework for understanding later developments, and to trace the Christianization of an established Roman theology of imperial victory.

1 The Roman Imperial Theology of Victory

The Byzantine theology of imperial victory, like the imperial office itself, was a blend of Roman precedents and Christian developments. It was, in other words, a Christianized version of an established Roman theology of imperial victory, where theology is used in a limited but precise manner, to designate the interpretation and understanding of the nature of the gods, or later of God, and in this context refers to the divine role in determining the outcome of battle.[5] A Roman commander would need to demonstrate a host of qualities, including *pietas*, *clementia*, and *liberalitas*, to secure both the favour of a divine patron and of his own troops, but the reward of victory in Roman thought rested squarely on two characteristics with which the client – from the age of Augustus the client was always the emperor – was endowed: *felicitas* and *virtus*. *Felicitas* is most commonly translated into English as "good fortune", but that does not accurately represent the concept. Being essential to victory, *felicitas* was a divine gift, not in the keeping of any mortal. Cicero is quite clear on this: *felicitas*, unlike *fortuna* which was granted to good and bad alike, was a reward for the deserving, a reward for *virtus*. This latter term is usually translated rather generally as "virtue", but in this context a more accurate rendering would embrace "manly aggressiveness", "bravery and "valour", corresponding to the classical Greek *andreia.* Sallust, Cicero's contemporary, identified this human quality, rather than divine favour, as the principal cause of victory, but as the Republic gave way to the Principate, the *virtus* of the emperor became a superhuman quality. Indeed, it was most commonly translated into later Greek as *dynamis*, which in Homer means bodily strength, but by the fourth century CE is used regularly to designate God. As the Roman Principate became the Dominate, there was no longer a balance between human *virtus* and divine *felicitas*, but rather one observes an "absolutist theology [of Victory] involving the notion of an invincible (*invictus*) emperor, possessed of a supernatural *virtus* procuring an eternal and universal Roman victory". That last clause is a quotation from Rudolph Storch, who observed astutely that this escalation

5 Rufus Fears, "The Theology of Victory at Rome", pp. 736-826; Heim, *La théologie de la*; Stephenson, *Constantine*, pp. 71-86.

mirrored both a decline in Roman military fortunes and the rise of monotheistic beliefs.[6]

In the half century between the end of the Severan dynasty and the foundation of the Tetrarchy in 284, more than 50 men claimed the title of emperor. 22 of these were universally recognized, of which the vast majority were both acclaimed and later murdered by troops under their command. All but two of the recognized emperors who reigned from CE 251 until 284 died in this manner, the exceptions being Valerian (253-60) who was captured in battle with the Persians, and Claudius II Gothicus (268-70), who contracted the plague. In 306, Constantine became the latest man to be raised up by his army, and his greatest fear was the he would be the next to die at their hands. The likelihood of his demise declined with success in war. Constantine's only means of retaining power in his early years was to lead his men in numerous successful campaigns, thus demonstrating divine favour for their joint endeavours, and to reward the troops handsomely for their loyalty. This he did, distributing solid gold brooch pins and rings to his officers with inscriptions declaring their loyalty to him (FIDEM CONSTANTINO). Gold and silver medallions struck to mark notable victories announced the "The Faith of the Army" (FIDES EXERCITUS) and regular bronze issues celebrated "The Valour of the Army" (VIRTUS EXERCITUS), suggesting that this quality, *virtus*, was shared with the commander through loyalty.

If *felicitas* was the emperor's personal gift, from his divine patron, then the *fides* of the army ensured that they, bound to him, would benefit from it. Thus, their common *virtus*, the "Valour of the Army", would be rewarded with victory. Yet the emphasis on loyalty, frequently pronounced and inscribed, also suggests that the emperor was never entirely secure. Ever more and greater victories were needed. In 312, Constantine led a seemingly foolhardy invasion of Italy, his sights set on the capture of Rome itself.

Leading too few troops, mostly Gauls and Germans, towards the stoutly defended city, Constantine drew his rival, Maxentius, out of the city surrounded by the Praetorian Guard and drove them into the River Tiber. It is at this point that many historians evince a passing interest in the imperial theology of victory: who was Constantine's divine patron, a god of battle without compare, who rewarded the emperor's *virtus* with such *felicitas*? Eusebius of Caesarea (*Vita Constantini* 1.28-32) relates that Constantine experienced a vision shortly before the battle:

6 Storch, "The 'Absolutist' Theology of Victory", pp. 197-206.

> About the time of the midday sun, when the day was just turning, [Constantine] said he saw with his own eyes, up in the sky and resting over the sun, a cross-shaped trophy formed from light, and a text attached to it which said, "By this conquer" ... Thereupon, as he slept, the Christ of God appeared to him with the sign which had appeared in the sky, and urged him to make a copy of the sign which had appeared in the sky, and to use this as protection against the attacks of the enemy. When the day came he arose and recounted the mysterious communication to his friends. Then he summoned goldsmiths and jewellers, sat down among them, and explained the shape of the sign, and gave them instructions about copying it in gold and precious stones ... This saving sign was always used by the emperor for protection against every opposing and hostile force, and he commanded replicas of it to lead all his armies.

Constantine summoned experts to explain the heavenly sign to him, who said that "the god was the Only-begotten Son of the one and only God, and the sign which appeared was a token of immortality, and was an abiding trophy of victory over death". It is striking that the sign of the cross is described as a trophy, in Greek *tropaion* or Latin *tropaeum*, the term for the cruciform symbol of victory that was erected by Roman armies. The trophy (*tropaeum, tropaion*) was, in origin, a pole or tree trunk with a cross-beam upon which were hung the arms and armour, notably the breast-plate, helmet and shields, of a vanquished foe. Representations of trophies were a commonplace on Roman coinage from the last century of the Republic until the early 3rd century CE. They were most often shown placed between bound captives or borne by the goddess Victoria. In each case the trophy shown commemorated a specific victory. Eusebius equated the Roman trophy with another Roman innovation, the crucifix, once an instrument of torture, which had become for the Christians a symbol of Christ's victory over death. It was this very symbol, therefore, "a cross-shaped trophy (*tropaion*) formed from light", that Eusebius claims was Constantine's vision and inspiration for his conversion to Christianity.[7] Constantine's standard remained a potent symbol of victory for emperors and those who led their armies through the Byzantine millennium. However, Justin Martyr had made exactly the opposite point to Eusebius, contrasting the power of Christ's symbol with the vanity of the *vexillum* and *tropaeum*.[8] No emperor, however

7 Eusebius, *Vita* Constantini, ed. Winkelmann, 1:28.

8 Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 55: "Symbols of the Cross: And the power of this form is shown by your own symbols on what are called flag standards and trophies, with which all your state possessions are made, using these as the insignia of your power and government, even though

mighty in battle, could achieve victory over death in the manner of Christ, except through Christ.[9] Christ's cross would become a far more potent symbol for Christian military victory than the *labarum*.

2 Christianizing the Theology of Victory

The conversion of the emperor to Christianity required an elaboration of the imperial "Theology of Victory". With the god of the Christians recognized as the "greatest god", one could now expect further uniquely Christian signs foretelling victory, such as the appearance of a cross of light above Jerusalem on 7 May 351. This apparition has received but a fraction of the scholarly attention lavished on Constantine's vision, and all modern commentators appear content to regard it as a solar halo, despite its appearance in the morning. Cyril of Jerusalem, who had recently taken up his episcopate, witnessed the spectacle, and took the opportunity to write to Constantius. In his letter Cyril described the appearance "during the holy days of Pentecost, on the Nones of May, at around the third hour of the day [9am], of an immense cross formed from light, in the sky, which stretched above the holy Golgotha as far as the holy Mount of Olives". It was visible to all in the city for several hours, brighter than the sun, and hordes flocked into the churches, young and old, men and women, locals and foreigners, Christians and others, intoning "as if from one mouth the name of Jesus Christ, their Lord". Cyril offered the vision to Constantius as a greater gift than the earthly crowns with which others had honoured him, and as concrete proof of divine favour for his rule, so that he might confront his "enemies with greater courage". The cross was a "trophy of victory", specifically of Christ's victory over death, but also a sign that Constantius has God as his ally, and that he might "bear the trophy of the cross, the boast of boasts, carrying forward the sign shown to us in the skies, of which heaven has made an even greater boast by displaying its form to human beings". Constantius' rival was Magnentius, and by Constantius' victory at Mursa on 28 September 351 the truth of Cyril's claims were demonstrated.

Given the similarity between the language he employed and that of Eusebius, writing a little over a decade earlier in the same part of the world, it is striking that Cyril did not compare the "immense cross formed from light" to that which Constantine and his troops were now believed to have witnessed four decades

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you do so unwittingly." See also Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 4.20: "For with the last enemy death did He fight, and through the trophy of the cross He triumphed."

9 This passage is adapted from Stephenson, *Constantine*, pp. 74-5.

earlier. The most obvious reason for his omission was that Constantius had not witnessed the vision in person. Therefore, it allowed Cyril to offer himself as interpreter, and to promote his own interests and those of his see, Jerusalem. As the interpreter of the apparition, Cyril kept Jerusalem to the fore, praising Constantius' piety as surpassing that of his most god-beloved father of blessed memory, by whose prayers the soterial wood of the true cross had been found in Jerusalem, and the holy places revealed. Whereas Constantine was blessed with revelations from Jerusalem's earth, his yet more pious son received his revelation from the heavens above the city, thus fulfilling the evangelist's prophecy (Mt. 24:30) that "the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky".

It is clear that Cyril's principle concern was no mundane battlefield, but without Cyril's observations, there is no reason for the apparition to have had any association with Constantius and his battle with Magnentius. By Cyril's mediation, the "immense cross of light" is presented as a sign of divine favour for Constantine's son. Had Magnentius won, one doubts the letter would have been preserved, or its contents transmitted in so many competing versions over the next century and more. Sozomen (IV.5) in the 5th century records the apparition, and refers to many reports about it, including the letter of Cyril of Jerusalem from which he has clearly drawn. Socrates Scholasticus (II. 28) passes over the episode rather disinterestedly, but provides some fascinating military details. "When Gallus was entering this city [of Antioch], the Saviour's sign appeared in the East: for a pillar in the form of a cross seen in the heavens gave occasion of great amazement to the spectators. His other generals the emperor despatched against Magnentius with considerable forces, and he himself remained at Sirmium, awaiting the course of events". No mention is made of Jerusalem, but we are grateful for the information that Constantius was then at Sirmium on the Danube, and his eastern army under his Caesar Gallus' command at Antioch. None of his forces were at Jerusalem, and this shows quite how inventive was a further account, written in the 440s by the Arian historian Philostorgios, preserved in a 9th-century epitome by Photios. This maintains that the cross appeared directly to Constantius, and thus heralded his victory over Magnentius.

> Moreover, that splendid and venerable sign did not escape the notice even of the soldiers. But though it was clearly seen by both armies, it frightened above all measure Magnentius and his partisans, who were addicted to superstitious practices; while, on the other hand, it inspired Constantius and his army with invincible bravery. Magnentius, however, having suffered this defeat from Constantius, afterwards recovered his strength by degrees, and, engaging with him in a second battle, was

> entirely defeated, and fled away to Lyons with the loss of nearly all his army.

This passage, as epitomized by Photios in the 9th century, telescopes events dramatically, particularly in its final sentence. According to Ammianus Marcellinus (XIV.5), our best source for military and political history in the third quarter of the 4th century, the final defeat of Magnentius came in 353, after which he committed suicide at Lyons on 10 August, and Constantius and his court wintered at Arles. However, having the "sign of the cross" appear to Constantius and his army was certainly Philostorgius' choice, rather than Photios' error, since thereby it mirrored Constantine's vision as presented by Sozomen and Socrates Scholasticus, and also Eusebius' presentation of the battle between Constantine and Maxentius as one between piety and superstition.

Constantius celebrated his victory over Magnentius with a triumphal *adventus* into Rome in 357. Naturally, panegyrists drew parallels between this and Constantine's own *triumphus* in Rome, including Themistios (*Or.* 3.44b), who delivered an oration in Rome representing the senate of the city of Constantinople. Ammianus Marcellinus (XVI.10), in a well-known passage, which draws on Xenophon's description of Cyrus, describes Constantius' deportment as he entered Rome on a "golden carriage in the resplendent blaze of shimmering precious stones" between "twin lines of infantrymen with shields and crests gleaming with glittering rays, clad in shining mail". Ammianus, a pagan, was silent about the incorporation of any explicitly Christian elements into the celebrations. Yet there is evidence that, far from setting aside his Christianity, Constantius paraded it, earning the opprobrium of the pagan historian Eunapios, writing *c.* 400, whose work has been preserved only in fragments in later works. David Woods has identified in one of the most controversial fragments (frg. 68, preserved as *Excerpta de sententiis* 72) an account of the same victory procession in Rome, where "small [painted] panels in the middle of the hippodrome" revealed to those there assembled that the victory was not due to "the bravery of the emperor or the strength of the soldiers, or anything that was a proper battle":

> Instead [on one of the painted panels] a hand extended as if from the clouds, and by the hand was written "The hand of God driving off the barbarians". (It is shameful but necessary to write this down.) And on the other side [was written], "The barbarians fleeing God", and other things even more odious and stupid than these, the nonsense of drunken painters.

Drunken painters were not responsible for the display, but the emperor himself, who would have ordered his troops to march through the streets to the hippodrome bearing these images painted on both sides of placards, a regular feature of triumphal celebrations. The sentiment behind the display, which Eunapios found so repugnant, was emblematic of Constantius' understanding of his victory over Magnentius. Constantius had seen that coins struck to mark his father's apotheosis in 337 featured the "Hand of God". His own right of succession had now been demonstrated conclusively by the reappearance of that helping hand, in the same form as it had appeared to Constantine, a cross of light in the sky guaranteeing his victory. Moreover, his army was responsible for reminding the citizens of Rome that Constantius had inherited his father's divine support, as demonstrated at Jerusalem in May 351 and at Mursa the following September. In victory the emperor himself sat motionless and expressionless above the melee, an object of veneration second only to the god he worshipped.

A further episode proves the continued valency of the Roman Theology of Victory in the mid-4th century. In his obituary of Julian the Apostate, Ammianus reminds us that there are "in the estimation of the philosophers, four principal virtues, moderation, wisdom, justice and courage, and corresponding to these also some external characteristics, such as knowledge of the art of war (*scientia rei militaris*), authority (*auctoritas*), good fortune (*felicitas*) and liberality (*liberalitas*), which as a whole and separately Julian cultivated with constant zeal". Expertise in the science of war is the first of the practical virtues, whereas *auctoritas* was necessary to command, and *felicitas* to ensure victory. Only *liberalitas* is better understood in a civilian context. In contrast, Constantius is shown by Ammianus to lack all these qualities. Immediately after that emperor's death, in describing his virtues and faults, Ammianus quotes Cicero: "Happiness is the good fortune that aids worthy designs, and one who does not aim at these can in no wise be happy." In this vein, the Battle of Strasbourg in 357 was decided "by the favour of the supreme *numen*" thanks to Julian's *felicitas*. Roman troops had been reminded of this by an unnamed *signifer* before the battle, and so great was the favour bestowed upon Julian, *felicissime omnium Caesar*, that 6,000 Alemans were killed, whereas only 243 Roman soldiers died. Seeking to undermine Julian, Constantius falsely and arrogantly assigned the victory to his own "favourable auspices (*felicibus auspiciis*)".

One would expect the classicizing historian Ammianus to employ traditional language and concepts to explain the battle, and to draw upon the Roman imperial theology of victory, particularly when treating of his hero Julian. But it is remarkable how frequently *fortuna* is Julian's companion in his

account, rewarding his *virtus* with *felicitas*. From his first appearance in the extant portion of Ammianus' history (XIV.11.28) to his demise, *fortuna* is rarely absent from the narrative, bringing him "the favour of divine power" (XV.2.8) or "her favouring breeze" (XVI.1.1), such that until the eve of his defeat and death in 363 "he dared many enterprises bordering upon rashness" (XXIV.6.4) and succeeded with *felicitas*, first adduced at the start of book 16. At his death, Julian's *felicitas* had evidently ebbed, but Ammianus reminds us that "For a long time his *felicitas* was so conspicuous that he seemed to ride on the shoulders of *Fortuna* herself, his faithful guide as he in victorious career surmounted enormous difficulties".

Just as striking is the virtual absence of the word *felicitas* from Ammianus' text before Constantius' death. It appears only four times, and its rarity is made all the more striking by its presence in the very first extant paragraph of his work, describing Gallus, Julian's brother, Constantius' Caesar. The second use is in the speech attributed to Constantius, delivered when he struck a peace treaty with the Alemans, the very same foes Julian would later defeat as *felicissime omnium caesar*. Ammianus surely intends to draw this contrast, and concludes that "the whole throng ... voted for peace. They were influenced especially by the conviction, which they had formed from frequent campaigns, that his fortune watched over him only in civil troubles, but that when foreign wars were undertaken, they had often ended disastrously". One is reminded immediately of Ammianus' earlier censure of Constantius' victory celebrations in Rome in 357. The third use of *felicitas* is another arrogant and mistaken attribution by Constantius, now of the death of Silvanus, "to the prosperous course of his own good fortune (*felicitatis suae prosperis cursibus assignabat*)". Once again Constantius only enjoyed favour in dealing with Romans, and it has been suggested that Ammianus, who played a role in the episode, exaggerated its significance to highlight Constantius' weaknesses, his susceptibility to flattery and haste to cruelty. The fourth use of *felicitas* is Constantius' claim on Julian's victory of the Alemans.

In drawing a stark contrast between Julian and Constantius, Ammianus uses the traditional language of the imperial theology of victory, but he does not seek to attribute victory to a *summus deus*, nor does he set up a "Clash of Gods" between Christian (Arian) Constantius and pagan Julian. *Felicitas* is the reward of *fortuna* for Julian's *virtus*, but this is a human quality, not a divine gift. For Christian writers, in contrast, the brief interlude of Julian's reign served only to sharpen their triumphalism when the apostate died in Persia, falling in war against the infidel because he had scorned the one true god. A new militant Christian triumphalism is evident in Lactantius' treatise *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, whose interventionist God would have been alien to the martyrs

who had accepted their deaths expecting no such revenge in this world and in the manner of Christ, who asked "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me" (Mt. 27:46). Already in 314, Constantine was depicted by Lactantius as an agent of Christian vengeance, whose god had ensured victory over Maxentius, loyal to the gods of Old Rome. Eusebius would develop this theme and apply it also to Constantine's victory over Licinius, who had betrayed the agreement of 313, captured in the Edict of Milan, not to persecute Christians and marched under a banner of Jupiter. Inconveniently for interpreters of Constantius' divinely-inspired victory, Magnentius was also a baptized Christian, although he was tolerant of traditional religious observance within the ranks and "did not stand in awe of the divine grace given to him through baptism", according to Athanasios of Alexandria (*Apologia ad Constantium* 7). Athanasios was a fierce opponent of Constantius and a chronicler of Arian intolerance, who was forced to deny his support for Magnentius before the emperor. What then was a Christian to make of the devastating defeat of the Roman army at the Battle of Adrianople in August 378, where the devout Christian emperor of the east, Valens, fell with two-thirds of his men, slaughtered by the Goths? That was simple, for, as St Ambrose observed, Valens was an Arian, whereas Gratian, emperor of the west, was assured of victory by virtue of his orthodoxy.

It fell to Theodosius (379-95) to institute orthodox Christianity as the religion of the Roman state, and to insist that all worship his god as their own. But still victory was his alone when Theodosius took the field against the Eugenius. According to Rufinus of Aquileia (XI.33), "he prepared for war by arming himself not so much with weapons as with prayers and fasts, guarded not so much by the nightwatch but by nightly prayer vigils". In contrast, Eugenius examined entrails and indulged in pagan sacrifice. As matters went against Theodosius at the Battle of Frigidus, he lay prostrate and prayed, shouting that his campaign had been undertaken for Christ in order to exact just retribution "lest the Gentiles ask, where is their God?" (Psalms 113:30). Consequently, a wind blew up of such strength and direction that it blew the arrows unleashed by Eugenius' archers back against them. So inspired were Theodosius' officers that one of outstanding piety, a certain Bacurius, fought through Eugenius' bodyguard to kill him. Rufinus (HE 11.33) concluded that "more glory accrued to the devout sovereign's victory from the failed expectations of the pagans than from the death of the usurper."[10]

Rufinus' account was followed closely by his readers, Augustine, Sozomen and Theodoret. Orosius (390-418), writing only shortly afterwards, placed emphasis still more singularly on Theodosius, who had by then been deserted

10 Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, pp. 93-131.

by his men, but who prostrated himself on the battlefield and maintained a vigil throughout the night, leaving "pools of tears which he had paid as the price for heavenly assistance" and receiving a visitation from John the Evangelist and Philip the Apostle. The following morning, he rose and threw himself into the thick of battle, certain of victory even if nobody else should follow him, and assisted by the whirlwind, the result was "determined from heaven between the party which without the help of men placed his faith humbly in God alone, and the party that most arrogantly trusted in its own strength and in idols". Yet, as Alan Cameron has demonstrated, there is no evidence that Eugenius was a pagan, an inconvenient fact ignored by those who described Theodosius' victory within a new orthodox Christian imperial theology of victory.

Correct, orthodox belief of the commander-in-chief was now paramount, but so was the orthodoxy of those he led, both those who fought and even those at home, lest God sanction defeat as punishment for their sins. Rufinus' account of the public liturgical events that Theodosius had staged before he left Constantinople shows how far matters had proceeded since Constantine had allowed his troops a day of rest on Sundays and encouraged them to march under his *labarum*. Such ceremonies would grow ever more central to military preparations as the late Roman world gave way to the Byzantine. In the camps the ritual life of the army was transformed. The mobile tent in the centre of the marching camp, once known as the *aedes*, the temple and treasury where the standards were stored and venerated, became a chapel. It was here that the units prayed together on holy days, but also "on the actual day of battle before anyone goes out the gate", as is prescribed in Maurice's *Strategikon* of the later 6th century. Maurice further required that the standards be blessed a day or two before battle; that the *Trisagion* – "Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us" – be sung by each unit early in the morning and late at night, before and after all duties; and that, as each unit marched out of camp, it should cry in unison "God is with us" thrice. Military services would become increasingly complex, as later military manuals reveal.

One can also discern through this period a shift from the traditional theology of victory, centred on the "manly aggressiveness" (*virtus/andreia*) of the commander, to a theology that rewarded personal piety. The new theology, moreover, accommodated the purity of each individual soldier and his correct faith. This is clearly reflected in the adaptation of the *sacramentum*, the military oath which had caused consternation among 3rd-century Christian commentators, but, as preserved by Vegetius (II.5.3), was now sworn: "By God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and by the majesty of the emperor, which second to God is to be loved and worshipped by the human race". No longer was the

numen (divine quality) of the emperor worshipped, but rather one swore loyalty to his "majesty", divinely given and guided.

In the reign of Justinian we see how regular Christian liturgical celebrations had replaced key holidays and festivals, a record of which we have preserved in the third-century *feriale* (religious calendar) of the Roman army. According to Corippus, in a panegyric celebrating John Troglyta's victories in North Africa, the enemy determined to attack on a holy day, perhaps simply a Sunday, when "The Roman soldiers, occupied with their customary rites, will fear no battle". But the general John and his second Ricinarius anticipated the attack, and like Theodosius at Cold River, spent the night before in prayer and the spilling of tears. As the sun rose, so their Christian soldiers trooped out with their standards to a tent in the centre of the camp, a mobile chapel, where a priest draped the altar and conducted the regular service. The congregants wept and together wailed: "Forgive our sins and the sins of our fathers, we beseech You, Christ". John, the general, was with them on his knees, more tears "pouring from his eyes like a river" as he intoned a long prayer for victory. Once the priest had performed the Eucharist, it was shown that "the gifts were acceptable to the Lord of heaven, and at once sanctified and cleansed" the army. Victory was secured in this manner, and those who would die did so purified by their tears and the sanctified elements.

3 Cosmic Combat

In his *Oration to the Saints*, a sermon that Constantine I delivered to an assembly of bishops on a Good Friday of uncertain date, the emperor set out his militant understanding of Christianity. Through his victories in war, the Romans witnessed the triumph of the Christian god, the grantor of victory, and they must continue to pray publicly and privately for his success. They must "petition Christ for one another with holy prayers and litanies, that he may continue to benefit us. For he is an unconquerable ally and defender of the righteous, he himself is the best judge, the guide to immortality, the bestower of eternal life".[11]

The Christian Roman emperor was no longer companion of a greatest god, he was the earthly representative of a singular God. Yet, others might still enjoy the patronage of supernatural powers, fallen angels and demons, and they had

11 *Oration to the Saints* 18; translated at Edwards, *Constantine and Christendom*, pp. 41-2. An acrostic, and Edwards' inventive translation, spell out *Iesous Christos Theou Huios Soter Stavros*.

to be slain. Fighting the devil and his demons was more than a metaphor for the conquest of sin, it was the only path to salvation. Just and victorious emperors ensured the safety of Christians and protected the Church. The mighty right arm of the emperor wielded the Lord's sword, "his fierce, great, and powerful sword (Isaiah 27:1)". According to Eusebius, for the dedication of Constantinople, "a panel was set high above the entrance to the imperial palace for the eyes of all to see". The image Constantine selected to place in this premier location is highly suggestive, and for Eusebius the godless tyrant Licinius was shown as the crooked dragon-serpent of the deep, Leviathan, pierced by the *labarum*, Constantine's battle standard topped with the Saviour's sign, the chi rho which had been manufactured in the very form Constantine now understood an earlier heavenly vision to have taken.[12]

> The picture showed the Saviour's sign placed above his own head, and the hostile and inimical beast, which had laid siege to the Church of God through the tyranny of the godless, he made in the form of a dragon borne down to the deep. For the oracles proclaimed him a "dragon" a "crooked serpent" in the books of the prophets of God. Therefore the emperor also showed to all, through the medium of the encaustic painting, the dragon beneath his own feet and those of his sons, pierced through the middle of his body with a javelin and thrust down in the depths of the sea. In this way he indicated the invisible enemy of the human race, whom he also showed to have departed to the depths of destruction by the power of the Saviour's trophy which was set up over his head.[13]

Eusebius records Constantine's own description of Licinius as a dragon, in a letter he sent to all the empire's Christian bishops: "liberty is restored and that dragon driven out of public administration through the providence of the supreme God and by our service".[14] In the Hebrew version of the primordial combat myth, a myth shared by all near eastern civilizations, Yahweh slew Leviathan (Hebrew: *Liwyatan*, also *Tannin* or *Rahab*, and the Canaanite *Yam*).[15]

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12 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, ed. Winkelmann, ed. Winkelmann 1.28-32; Stephenson, *Constantine*, pp. 182-9.

13 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, ed. Winkelmann, 3.3, here in the translation by Cameron/Hall, *Eusebius*, pp. 122, 255-6.

14 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, ed. Winkelmann, 2.45; trans. Cameron/Hall, *Eusebius*, pp. 111, 244.

15 Wakeman, *God's Battle*, pp. 55-82. See also Fontenrose, *Python*, pp. 209-10, 222 (motif B61), and notably 134: "*Ba'al* 38f.: 186f.: "Because thou didst smite Lotan [i.e. Ltn = Leviathan],

The tale of Leviathan's defeat in the creation of the cosmos is excised from Genesis 1, but preserved in numerous passages in the Old Testament, notably in Psalms, Job, Ezekiel and Isaiah.[16] At Isaiah 27:1, we learn that: "In that day, the Lord will punish with his sword, his fierce, great and powerful sword, Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan the coiling serpent; he will slay the monster of the sea".[17] At Isaiah 51:9-10, Leviathan is Rahab: "Was it not you [Lord] that hewed Rahab, that pierced the dragon? Was it not you that dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep".

The New Testament cast Christ as the cosmic conqueror in two quite distinct guises. In one, Christ gained ultimate victory by knowingly granting an ephemeral win to his adversary, allowing Satan through Judas to betray him. The Crucifixion can be read as the Christian culmination of the combat myth, where Christ triumphed over the devil by his defeat. This message was disseminated in the Pauline epistles, and proved a justification for subsequent calls to martyrdom within Christian communities, a comfort to those who would be martyred and to their families, and an explanation for persecution. When the Roman state was on the side of Satan apocalyptical interpretations issued forth, for example that of John of Patmos. John's apocalypse translates the combat myth from a cosmogonic struggle for the creation of order from chaos to an apocalyptic ending of earthly order corrupted by the beast, who held sway over sea and earth. In a Christian Empire, the emperor himself was cast in the role of Christ, returned in majesty seated on a white horse, "just in judgement and just in war", a sword projecting from his mouth to smite the nations. "For he it is who shall rule them with an iron rod and tread the winepress of the wrath and retribution of God". Constantine saw himself as a second Christ, and his preferred Christ, inevitably, was John's armed judge, not he who gained a greater victory through defeat. Justinian's aforementioned equestrian statue cast him in this role, the embodiment of Christian victory.

In Revelation, Christ takes Yahweh's role as cosmic conqueror, the ultimate victor over evil and death, as foretold in Psalm 90 (91): 13 – "You shall tread

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the writhing serpent/Didst destroy the crooked serpent/The accursed one of seven heads'".

16 Wakeman, *God's Battle*, pp. 56-82, collects all references to "The Sea Monster", Rahab, Leviathan, and Tannin. See, for example, Psalm 74:12-14: "But you, O God, are my king from of old; you bring salvation upon the earth. It was you who split open the sea by your power; you broke the heads of the monster in the waters. It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan and gave him as food to the creatures of the desert". Psalm 89.10: "You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them. You crushed Rahab like one of the slain; with your strong arm you scattered your enemies".

17 Isaiah 27:1.

upon the lion and adder: The young lion and the serpent you shall trample under foot" – and remembered at Luke 10:19 – "Behold I give unto you the power to tread on serpents and scorpions and the power to overcome all the power of the enemy, nothing will harm you". A rare image of this militant Christ has been preserved in a 6th-century mosaic at Ravenna's Archbishop's Chapel, which clearly emulates earlier imperial and numismatic art. Dressed as a general, a cross is slung over Christ's shoulder in the manner an emperor might be shown with a spear or, occasionally, a trophy. His tunic billows out like a commander's cape fixed at one shoulder with an imperial brooch. Under his right foot is a cowed, crouching lion, and under his left a rather modest snake. Christ holds open a book at a verse from John 14:6: *Ego sum via veritas et vita*, "I am the path, the truth, and the life, nobody comes to the Father but through me". This is a gloss on the psalm, a prayer-poem to the protection offered only by the Almighty. The image is rare but not, however, unique in Ravenna, for a late 5th-century stucco relief in the Orthodox Baptistery of Neon again depicts a militant Christ militant trampling the serpent and lion, their positions reversed.

For those not drawn to John of Patmos' apocalypse, Christ's greatest victory remained that over death itself, so "that through death He might destroy him that had power over death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15). Still, the paradox of victory through defeat troubled many early Christian thinkers. Ephrem the Syrian offered a vision of Christ thrusting his cross into Hades' stomach, thus freeing the dead: "With this precious weapon Christ tore apart the voracious stomach of Hades and blocked the treacherous fully opened jaws of Satan. Seeing this, Death quaked and was terrified and released all whom he held beginning with the first man".[18] The significance of Hades' stomach is that the dead, including Adam, were held there. Those who would later emulate Christ split the stomach of dragons with the sign of the cross, for example St Marina (*Acta Marinae* 25-6). Origen wished to place Satan on the cross in Christ's stead: "The Son of God was visibly crucified in the flesh, but invisibly it was the devil who was fixed to the cross with his principalities and powers". Origen is alluding to Paul, at Ephesians 6:12, and proceeds to quote from Colossians 2:14-15: "What was opposed to us he has removed from the way, fixing it to the cross".[19] The principalities and powers of Rome continued to persecute and would make a martyr of Origen himself. Yet the symbol of Roman persecution itself was inverted, becoming the ultimate Christian sign,

18 Quoted in translation by Frazer, "Hades stabbed by the cross of Christ", pp. 153-61, at 158.

19 Origen, *Homilies on Joshua* 8:3.

the cross, which henceforth was carried into battle, and which inspired the Byzantine, battle cry: "The Cross Conquers".[20]

4 The Cross

Eastern and western Christians shared the late Roman inheritance sketched to this point, for as long as the western empire endured, and in the 5th century all evinced an equal devotion to the cross and its martial power, and expected divine intervention in battles. Quodvultdeus, bishop of Carthage and immigrant to Milan, looked to the East and reported with approval that "Arcadius, a pious and Christian prince, was emperor" [in Constantinople].

> To avoid returning Armenians who had taken refuge with him, he went to war with the Persians, assured of victory in advance by a sign: bronze crosses which appeared on the cloaks of his soldiers as they went into battle. For this reason, when he had won victory the emperor ordered also that gold coins be struck with the same sign of the cross, coins which still circulate today in the whole world, especially in Asia.[21]

It has been argued that in the 420s, as war escalated between Byzantium and the Persians, Arcadius' son, Theodosius II (408-50), was inspired by his sister Pulcheria to recognize in the cross a guarantee of imperial victory, and have it placed on imperial coins held by a winged Victory, the so-called Long-Cross *solidi*.[22] At the same time, Theodosius sent to Jerusalem "much money … [and] a golden cross studded with precious stones to be raised on the holy site of Golgotha", which symbolized Christ's own victory over death at that place.[23] Versions of the legend of Helena, mother of Constantine I, which first circulated in the Theodosian period, relate that she discovered the true cross and

20 According to Chrysostomos in the late 4th century the cross was ubiquitous, to be seen "everywhere most frequently. It shines on the walls of houses, in books, in cities, villages, in deserted and inhabited places." (*Contra Judeos et Gentiles*: PG 48, col. 826). Its place in battle, therefore, was neither especially remarkable nor unique to the Byzantines. However, it does still deserve a full study, which would be extremely long.

21 Quodvultdeus, *Liber promissionum et praedictorum Dei*, ed. R. Braun, *Sources chrétiennes* 101-02, Paris 1964, II, pp. 558-60.

22 Holum, "Pulcheria's crusade", 153-72; Holum/Vikan, "The Trier Ivory", 126-33.

23 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 86; trans. Mango/Scott, *The chronicle of Theophanes* Confessor, pp. 135-6.

two nails, which she sent back to her son, and which he incorporated into his helmet and his diadem.[24]

Between the 6th and 8th centuries there was a parting of the ways between eastern and western Christians. The militant Christ wielding his cross as portrayed at Ravenna continued to appeal to the Franks, as is clear from Venantius Fortunatus' 6th-century hymns *vexilla regis* and *pange lingua*.[25] At Charlemagne's court in Aachen, from 800, Christ trampling the lion and serpent was painted into several books, including the Stuttgart and Utrecht Psalters, and carved into at least three ivory book covers.[26] The Douce Ivory (Oxford, Bodleian MS Douce 176, upper cover), produced perhaps for Charles himself, places the Old Testament motif centrally, surrounded by New Testament scenes of Christ's life. Between Venantius and Charlemagne, the Franks had established an empire and stopped the advance of Islam in the West. In contrast, the Byzantines had suffered the shock of defeat. In Michael McCormick's telling formulation: "The brilliant military successes of Justinian's armies dissipated into wars of attrition and stalemate; conditions worsened when the terrifying hammer blows of the great plague caused further disorder to the fragile late Roman economy, and Persian armies were able to drive deep into the East Roman heartland. The cascade of defeats and death destabilized the late Romans' view of the world and themselves, unleashing the destructive forces of riot, revolution, and religious persecution around the *mare nostrum*".[27]

Into this maelstrom sailed Herakleios, icons of the Virgin Mary lashed to the masts of the ships that carried him and his Berber federates from Carthage to Constantinople. It should not be forgotten that Herakleios was sailing to civil war, and the Virgin protected him and his alien allies in ousting and killing his fellow Christians and Romans. George of Pisidia, in his extant works, relates that the *Parthenos*, "Virgin", is victorious because "she alone knows how to conquer nature, first by birth and then by battle".[28] In George's *Bellum Avaricum*,

24 Kalavrezou I., "Helping hands for the empire", p. 54, provides references and commentary.

25 Translations can be read at Viladesau, *The Beauty of the Cross*, pp. 37-40. As Vidaescu, p. 41, notes: ""The cross is God's means of glorious victory in battle (*Pange Lingua* 1; *Vexilla Regis* 7)."

26 Kessler, "Evil Eye(ing). Romanesque art as a shield of faith", p. 109.

27 McCormick, "The liturgy of war from Antiquity to the Crusades", pp. 45-67, at 48.

28 Theophanes the Confessor later relates that Herakelios sailed with "fortified ships that had on their masts reliquaries and icons of the Mother of God, as George the Pisidian relates". See Mango/Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 427-28, referring to George of Pisidia, *Heraclias,* ed. Pertusi, II.15. But George refers here not to the "Mother of God", but to an icon of the uncorrupted Virgin (*Parthenos*), which Herakleios used against Phokas, "corrupter of Virgins". See Georgio di Pisidia*, Poemi,* I, ed. Pertusi, p. 252. The only

an account of the Avar siege of Constantinople in 626, Mary is consistently addressed as *Parthenos*, rather than as *Theotokos* (God-bearer) or *Theometer* (Mother of God). The Virgin and her tears were both inspiration and salvation: "For the more you spread the flow of the eyes, the more you prevent the flow of blood", George observed.[29]

The legitimacy of Herakleios' usurpation was demonstrated, eventually, by victory in a protracted war. During his 30-year reign, which coincided with the mature years of the Prophet Muhammad, Herakleios fought long religiously-charged wars against the Zoroastrian Persians. In the wake of this brutal and protracted confrontation, which diminished both super-powers, the Arabs launched a remarkable series of expeditions. They overran Persia, ending the Sasanian Empire forever in the 630s, and very nearly destroyed Byzantium after that, reducing it to a rump Christian state perched on the edge of a vast Eurasian-North African Islamic caliphate. It is hardly surprising, given the tone and nature of Byzantine-Persian warfare, that as this new force swept out of the Arabian Peninsula, it was propelled by a developing notion of "holy war" and an escalation in apocalypticism. Whether and how much the idea of jihad owes to 6th- and 7th-century Christian rhetoric has received close scrutiny in recent years, for it is clear that the two religious cultures, established Christianity and one emergent Islam, conducted a debate even as their practitioners shed each other's blood. The remarkable eruption of Muslims could only be understood as God's punishment for Christians' sins. A parallel issue, the use and nature of religious art, must be understood in this context, and it is well established that an explanation of Byzantine iconoclasm must take account of the ban on graven images in Islam from the 690s (although not before then).

Recent scholarship has begun to highlight the centrality of the victory-bringing cross, *stauros nikopoios*, to developments in the seventh and eighth centuries.[30] The recovery of the "True Cross", upon which Christ had been crucified, and which had been captured in the Persian sack of Jerusalem in 614,

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reference I have found in George's oeuvre to Mary as Mother, not Virgin, is in a scene where she is cast as "Mother of the Judge", presiding over a case decided by battle: Georgio di Pisidia, *Poemi*, I, ed. Pertusi, p. 193. See also Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, pp. 38-40, 44-46.

29 Georgio di Pisidia, *Poemi*, I, ed. Pertusi, pp. 176, 182-83. The Virgin's role in protecting the city during the Avar siege is also reported by Theodore Synkellos, *De obsidione Constantinopolitana sub Heraclio imperatori*, XIX: "It was proved most clearly that the Virgin alone fought this battle and won the victory". See Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, pp. 64, 65-66.

30 Gagé, "*Stavros nikopoios*", pp. 370-400, is a seminal study. Of more direct utility here: Thierry, "Le culte de la croix dans l'empire byzantin", pp. 205-28; Taft/Kazhdan, "The Cult of the Cross", pp. 551-3.

was not a motivation for Herakleios' wars, and does not feature in literature composed between 622 and 628 (notably the *Persian Expedition* and *Heraclias* of George of Pisidia). However, after the negotiated recovery of the cross, its return to Jerusalem in 630, and its transfer in 635 to Constantinople ("New Jerusalem"), it became the central motif of the Herakleios story.[31] The cross was presented as the symbol of Christian victory in various historical works, in the later poems of George of Pisidia, and on Herakleios' coins.[32] This appears to have been the escalation of an established trajectory, and one notes that in 591 the emperor Maurikios had ridden out behind a fragment of the true cross raised on a golden spear.[33] Andrew of Crete (*c.* 660-740) wrote three, perhaps four, homilies on the exaltation of the cross, in which its military function played a minor but significant role, for example: "Besides the cross is the victory of emperors (*basilewn*) and pious generals and armies, the defeat of opponents and the weapon of truth shielding the faithful according to the great David – for Christ is the truth and the cross is the weapon of Christ".[34] The homily employs the new imperial style, *basileus*, introduced by Herakleios to emphasize the sacred, Davidic nature of the office, and it alludes to Psalm 90 (91). Andrew's reverence parallels the devotion to the cross demonstrated by the emperor Leo III, who summoned Andrew to Constantinople in 730, but subsequently exiled him for his similar commitment to the veneration of relics and icons, of which Leo disapproved.

Leo III is remembered as the instigator of imperial iconoclasm, but the formulation Leo *Philostauros* may be more accurate.[35] Traces of a tale sympathetic to Leo have survived in the 11th-century Armenian chronicle by Stephen of Taron, which relate that in order to liberate the city of Constantinople from the Arab siege of 717-18, Leo took the True Cross, the "unconquerable standard upon his shoulders ... and three times he struck the waters of the sea with the standard of the cross, saying "Help us, Christ, Saviour of the World." And imme-

31 Drijvers, "Heraclius and the *restitutio cruces*", pp. 175-90; Mango, "Deux études sur Byzance et la Perse sassanide", pp. 105-18; Frolow, "La vraie croix et les expéditions d'Héraclius en Perse", pp. 88-93.

32 Howard-Johnston, "The official history of Heraclius' Persian campaigns", 57-87; Whitby, "A new image for a new age", pp. 197-225; idem, "George of Pisidia's presentation of the reign of Heraclius and his campaigns", pp. 157-73.

33 *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae*, ed. C. de Boor, CSHB, Leipzig 1887, pp. 219-20; Dennis, "Religious services in the Byzantine army", 108; Mergiali-Sahas, "Byzantine emperors and holy relics", pp. 49-50.

34 De Groote, "Andrew of Crete's Homilia de exaltatione s. cruces", pp. 473-75.

35 Brubaker/Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, pp. 140-3.

diately the depths of the sea were stirred and drowned the army of Ishmael".[36] Leo placed the cross on the reverse of his silver *miliaresion*, a coin struck from 720.[37] At Nicaea, restorations to the walls carried out after the Arab assault of 727 are accompanied with an elegant inscription, naming Leo and Constantine the Christ-loving emperors, that begins with the sign of the cross.[38] When sections of the land walls of Constantinople fell in an earthquake in 740, Leo and his son Constantine V restored them and marked their work extensively with the sign of the cross.[39] At the site of power on the Chalke gate, the entrance to the imperial palace, where Constantine I had placed an image of his *labarum* piercing the twisting serpent-dragon Licinius/Leviathan, Leo III erected "the likenesses of apostles and prophets, and wrote down their utterances about the Lord – thus proclaiming the cross of salvation to be the proud ornament of their faith".[40] Between the periods traditionally called the first and second iconoclasms, this image was removed from the gate, to be replaced with an icon of Christ; the very image Leo was later charged with removing, thus initiating the first period of iconoclasm. According to the *horos* of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, in 787, icons and the cross were to be treated with equal reverence. When the Chalke icon was, in turn, removed at the start of the second period of iconoclasm, in 814-15, Leo V and his son Symbatios-Constantine set up iconoclastic verses, five anagrams arranged in the form of the cross around an image of the cross.[41]

Wielding the cross effectively, the first "iconoclast" emperors restored the empire's standing in its existential war with Islam and secured the Roman position in the Balkans. Leo devoted much energy to the realm's defences,

36 Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm*, pp. 134-6; Anderson, "Leo III and the Anemodoulion", pp. 49-50; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, p. 140, n. 254. A competing tradition, far better known, would attribute the liberation of Constantinople to the intercession of the Theotokos, through the power of her icon paraded around the city walls.

37 Walter, "The apotropaic function of the victorious cross", pp. 195-98. See now also Walter, *The Warrior Saints*, pp. 282-84.

38 "†At the place where, with divine help, the insolence of the enemy was put to shame, there the Christ-loving (*philochristoi*) emperors Leo and Constantine restored with zeal the city of Nicaea, having erected in demonstration of their deed a trophy of victory by setting up a *kentenarion* tower, which was completed by the toil of Artabasdos, the glorious *patrikios* and *kouropalates*". See Brubaker/Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, p. 144.

39 Von Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople*, pp. 97-100, offers good illustrations.

40 For arguments and sources, see Brubaker/Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, pp. 128-35, 140, 144.

41 Pentcheva, "What is a Byzantine icon? Constantinople versus Sinai", pp. 267-9.

levying taxes to repair Constantinople's land walls, and reconstituted the military provinces better to defend against assaults by land and, especially, by sea. He ended Arab expansion into Anatolia by his victory at Akroinon in 740. Constantine, like his father, proved to be a general of considerable ability, launching a full-scale invasion of the Balkans to conquer the *Sklaviniai* in Macedonia. When threatened again at home, he sought to restore order with a purge of those who opposed his authority in 765. Extant accounts tell us little about this episode, however, as his actions have been obscured by an obsession with the veneration of icons and Constantine's treatment of a monk known as St Stephen the Younger.

As the 9th century dawned, a woman, Irene, signed documents as "emperor" after blinding and killing her own son. Irene was an opportunist, whose move to restore the veneration of icons garnered her support among powerful dissenters in Constantinople. Later sources present this great act of piety as more significant than her son's murder. Irene was succeeded by Nikephoros I, a financial official turned general who was slaughtered with his army in 811 by the troops of Khan Krum. A familiar story, similar to one first told by Herodotus, circulated that the pot-bellied general's skull became a Bulgar drinking vessel. The shock of defeat, surely reflecting divine anger, led to a renewed commitment to the empire's physical and spiritual defences, including the restoration of iconoclasm.[42] The Bulgars would create another 380 neomartyrs, men who preferred death to apostasy, before a 30-year peace treaty was negotiated, a summary of which was inscribed on a column found at the Bulgar capital of Pliska. The death in 842 of Theophilos, who made peace with the Bulgars and celebrated both great victories and defeats against the Abbasid caliphate, was followed shortly by the restoration of icons, later celebrated as the "Triumph of Orthodoxy". Our sources' focus on a dispute over images has obscured the historical significance of military achievements in this period, when the last vestiges of the antique world were swept away, and a new balance was established between Byzantium and its neighbours, the Bulgars and Abbasids. Embassies travelled regularly to Baghdad, sharing ancient knowledge and new scientific discoveries, while missionaries began to depart for the north, bringing Orthodoxy to the Bulgars and Slavs.

42 Stephenson, "About the emperor Nikephoros and how he leaves his bones in Bulgaria", 87-109, for commentary and full references.

5 The Middle Byzantine Theology of Victory

From the later 9th century to the early years of the 11th, Byzantine emperors returned from the battlefield more often in victory than defeat. At this time the holiest of relics, including those of Christ's Passion, were collected from the towns recovered from Muslim rule. They were transported to Constantinople and used to sanctify battle standards, which were sent into the field. It was also prescribed in Leo VI's *Taktika* that three-day fasts were to be observed and hymns sung before battle was joined, and troops were ordered to cry out "Lord Have Mercy" up to one hundred times on both the eve and morning of battle, and at the very moment of engagement to cry out, as before, "The Cross Conquers". To facilitate victory, a cruciform reliquary containing the "life-giving wood" of the True Cross, Christ's crucifix, should precede any emperor taking part in a military campaign. Just such a cross-shaped reliquary survives, part of the Limburg Staurotheke, inscribed for Constantine VII and Romanos II, with a verse ending "With it Christ formerly smashed the gates of Hades, reviving those who had died, and now the crown-wearing commanders with it shatter the impudent acts of barbarians".[43] The same period witnessed a boom in military ceremonial, with more triumphal processions taking place than in the previous three centuries. Moreover, one can identify the continued rise of cults of military saints and martyrs, such as St George and the two Theodores, whose icons were objects of veneration, and whose lives were rewritten and collated in new liturgical compilations called *synaxaria*. Mary, now definitively identified as the Theotokos, operated as the intercessor between needy emperors and their divine entourage, or she might herself offer protection through her icons and relics.[44]

These devotions had long and established roots, but many have detected in this period an intensification in attention to the sacred aspects of warfare, which may be related to the re-emergence of jihad within the Muslim world as the Abbasid Caliphate ceased to be a powerful centralized counterweight to the Christian empire. Border warriors and fighters for the faith operated without access to state resources, and therefore cohered around successful generals, for example the charismatic Saif ad-Dawla, Hamdanid emir of Aleppo, against whom Nikephoros Phokas (963-9), cut his teeth. Nikephoros, whose very name means "Bringer of Victory", seized imperial power in a military coup. His cousin John Tzimiskes and his fellow generals had surrounded

43 Pentcheva, "Containers of Power: Eunuchs and Reliquaries in Byzantium", p. 111, offers a text, a slightly different translation to that given here, and a commentary.

44 Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*.

Nikephoros' tent, swords drawn, demanding he accept their acclamation, in the manner that Constantine I had been "coerced" by his troops.[45] Nikephoros enjoyed such comparison with Constantine and evinced a particular devotion to the cross.[46] An inscription carved into an ivory reliquary of the True Cross, now kept at the church of San Francesco of Cortona in Tuscany, but which once belonged to Nikephoros, reads: "In the past, Christ gave to the powerful emperor Constantine/the cross for salvation/and now our emperor Nikephoros/ puts to flight the tribes of barbarians because he possesses it".[47] In his narrative, Leo the Deacon calls the generals who acclaimed Nikephoros "Men of blood", alluding to Psalm 5:6, and puts in the mouths of Nikephoros and John Tzimiskes the notion that a ruler must be a man of honour, a warrior feared by barbarians, and not children under nurses and a eunuch, as were the young emperors Basil and Constantine. Leo does not specify that according to the Psalm the Lord hates "the bloody and deceitful man".[48] But Nikephoros would die by the same hand that raised him up, and Leo knew this, recounting Nikephoros' murder by John Tzimiskes, who conspired with the empress, his lover, to usurp the throne. John killed the emperor as he lay on the floor of his bedchamber, exhausted from hours of prayer. In death, Nikephoros was celebrated as a martyr by the monks of Mount Athos, where the first and richest foundation was endowed with booty from his conquests. A liturgical office composed at the Great Lavra Monastery is still performed which offers prayers for his immortal soul. One of Nikephoros' battle crosses was donated to the Great Lavra. Measuring 102 cm in height and 73 cm across, the ends of silver cross are decorated with roundels containing portrait busts. On the reverse of the cross, running between a central icon of the Theotokos and the extremities, is an inscription, a quotation of Psalm 43:5 (44:5): "Through you we push back our enemies, through your name we trample our foes".[49]

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45 Leo the Deacon 3.40, trans. Talbot/Sullivan, *The History of Leo the Deacon*, p. 91. On Crocus and the Regii, see Stephenson, *Constantine*, p. 99.

46 Walter, *The Warrior Saints*, 282-3.

47 Oikonomides, "The concept of "Holy War" and two tenth-century Byzantine ivories", pp. 62-86.

48 Anna Komnene understood the allusion: Anna Komnene, *Alexias,* X 8, ed. D. Reinsch/A. Kambylis, Annae Comnenae Alexias (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 40), Berlin 2001, p. 307: "But the Latin barbarian will at the same time handle sacred objects, fasten a shield to his left arm and grasp a spear in his right. He will communicate the Blood and Body of Christ and meanwhile gaze on bloodshed and become himself a "man of blood", as David says in the Psalm."

49 Grabar, "La precieuse croix de la Lavra Saint-Athanase au Mont-Athos", pp. 99-125.

John Tzimiskes launched a Balkan campaign in large part to justify his usurpation, although the presence of pagan Rus at the empire's northern frontier allowed it to be cast as in Christian Roman interests. Amassing a huge army, John marched against the Rus' who had captured fortifications on and within the Danube frontier, including Preslav. Upon capturing that city, formerly the Bulgarian capital, John named it after himself, Ioannoupolis, reviving an antique practice. John's apologia is borrowed into Skylitzes' account of the campaign: "Exulting in their recent victories, the Romans were looking forward to a decisive battle, knowing they had God on their side, He who has no wish to come to the aid of princes with unclean hands, but always helped the victims of injustice".[50] It is no surprise, therefore, but to be expected that as John launched his assault on Dorostolon, warrior saints came to his assistance. A victory on George's feast day, 23 April, was celebrated with offerings to the "gloriously triumphant martyr". Likewise, allegedly on the feast day of St Theodore *stratelates*, 8 June, the ultimate victory over the Rus was assured by the personal intervention of the saint: "a storm arose in the south, blowing into the Skyths" faces ... and a man appeared mounted on a white horse, thrusting forward, routing the enemy ranks".[51] That this was Theodore himself was confirmed by the dream of "a trustworthy woman in Constantinople", who had seen the Theotokos herself send Theodore to John's aid.[52] According to Leo the Deacon, as a reward for this intervention, and in line with his antiquarian habit, John renamed Dorostolon Theodoroupolis.[53] He showed his humility and suitability to rule in victory, but also by his humility when at this triumph in Constantinople John refused to ascend the *quadriga*, but instead placed an icon of the Theotokos in the place of honour. This was no local icon, but one he had captured at Preslav, Ioannoupolis.[54] And he struck gold coins showing

50 John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, p. 285.

51 Leo the Deacon, 9.9, trans.Talbot/Sullivan, *The History of Leo the Deacon*, p. 197, elaborates: "a wind and rainstorm broke out, pouring down heavily from the sky, and struck the enemy, and the dust was stirred up and irritated their eyes". Kaldellis, "The original source for Tzimiskes' Balkan campaign", 38-41, shows that the given date, 8 June, is deliberately misleading, and that the model for this account is the appearance of the Dioskouroi at the Battle of Lake Regillus. He notes the parallels too with accounts of the Battle of Frigidus, above.

52 John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, p. 292. According to Leo the Deacon, 9.9, trans. Talbot/Sullivan, *The History of Leo the Deacon* p. 197, she was a nun.

53 Leo the Deacon, 9.12; trans. Talbot/Sullivan, *The History of Leo the Deacon*, p. 200, and also 197, n. 47.

54 Kaldellis, "The original source for Tzimiskes' Balkan campaign", pp. 48-51, posits the summoning out of the Theotokos from Preslav by a revival of the Roman practice of *evocatio*.

himself being crowned by the Theotokos, while hovering above them both was a 4th-century motif, the Hand of God.[55]

The cults of warrior saints were established in the same manner as early as other martyr cults, although the iconography drew on additional sources. The earliest Christian iconography depicts an unnamed holy rider, whose anonymity allowed multivalency: he might be effective against any number of demons. Later, the names Sissinios, Sissinarios, or Solomon were invoked, the latter made famous by the *Testament of Solomon*, a magical text replete with references to demons and how to confront them. Images of holy riders, named and unnamed, featured on amulets and rings, tropes of household magic. This imagery was itself borrowed into the household context from military iconography of an earlier era. Riders spearing serpents and boars are widely represented on Roman and earlier *stelae* commemorating soldiers. A votive carving from Krupac, Serbia, depicts Apollo and Asklepios as Thracian riders, offering their open hands to the serpent entwined around the tree beside an altar. A votive stele of the Dioskouroi, as Thracian riders, now in the Louvre, shows the twins mounted either side of a tree of life in which one sees a serpent. They are striking at a boar with their spears. If it is genuine, a unique clay icon from Vinica that depicts and names St Theodore is among the earliest known depictions of a named saint, and it is noteworthy that his name is recorded in Latin. A second panel shows and names George.[56] A gold pectoral cross of the later 6th or 7th century in the British Museum is inscribed with an orant Virgin between Christ and a military saint on the vertical bar with a angels on the transverse bar. An inscription on the reverse reveals that the cross belonged to George of Skopelos, but although we may imagine that St George would be depicted, he is not named.

Henry Maguire has traced the shift from anonymous holy riders involved in household magic to the named military saints of middle and late Byzantium, and has associated the addition of inscriptions with the closer regulation of holy images, their use and nature after iconoclasm, which required the naming of all such riders.[57] Foremost among them were the two Theodores,

55 McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 170-6, and now Kaldellis, "The original source for Tzimiskes' Balkan campaign", p. 37, on Plutarch's *Camillus*, an ancient work which is engaged in an intertextual dialogue from a source sympathetic to Tzimiskes, which was later used by both Leo and Skylitzes. On the historical context for the war, see Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, pp. 51-5.

56 Dimitrova, "Inscriptions and iconography in the monuments of the Thracian rider", pp. 209-29; K. Balabanov/Krstevski C., *Terakotni ikoni od Vinica*, Skopje 1990.

57 Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies*, pp. 120-7.

who emerged by bifurcation, and George, but great honour was also given to Demetrios, patron of the medieval empire's second city, Thessalonike.

In the psalter portrait of Basil II, in the Marcian Library in Venice (Cod. Marc. gr. 17, fol. 3r), the two Theodores, George and Demetrios are portrayed in roundels and are named, as are Nestor, Prokopios, Eustathios and Merkourios. Between them is the emperor standing in the battle dress of the Roman general holding in his right hand a lance and in his left a sheathed sword.[58] The emperor is shown wearing the crimson imperial boots, and being crowned with a stemma set with a red stone and a double row of pearls. The coronation is performed by Gabriel, one of two archangels above his left and right shoulders, below each of whom are the busts of three military saints. Basil is standing, like a statue, on a small raised footstool (*souppedion*), behind and over eight prostrate figures performing *proskynesis*. At the top centre of the picture, immediately above Basil, a nimbate bust of Christ suspends a second crown over the emperor's head. A poem that faces the image explains the scene:

> A strange wonder is to be seen here: from Heaven, Christ with his life-bringing right hand extends the crown (stemma), the symbol of rulership to the faithful and mighty ruler Basil. Below are the first of the incorporeal beings, one of whom, taking [the crown] has brought it down and is joyfully crowning [the emperor]. The other, adding victories to rulership is placing the spear, a weapon that scares the enemies away, in the ruler's hand. The martyrs are his allies, for he is their friend. They cast down those lying at his feet.

Basil II's epitaph is a summary of his achievements in war, protecting the Christian people, against which nothing else was significant.[59] In all of these episodes, texts and images, the emperor is the fulcrum, whether on the battlefield or celebrating his victory, earning divine intervention and communicating grace, receiving crowns and arms. The ethos of the soldier emperor is well captured in the emergence of tales of single combat, whereby the fate of many

58 Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-slayer*, pp. 51-5. The portrait may usefully be compared to that of Basil I (Cod. Par. gr. 510, fol. 100v), crowned with the stemma by Archangel Gabriel and handed the labarum (not sword or lance) by his patron Saint Elijah. Here, all three stand on a low, rectangular *souppedion*. A verse inscription around the border states that St Elijah guarantees Basil victory, and Gabriel crowns him protector of the world.

59 Stephenson, "The tomb of Basil II", pp. 227-38; idem, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-slayer*, pp. 49-50.

might be determined by the virtue and bravery of one. When Tzimiskes proposes this to his Russian antagonist, Sviatoslav, he is brushed off. But the emperor led from the front, rallying his troops, summoning divine aid.[60]

The examples offered here could be multiplied many times over, and there is sufficient evidence, now being explored by historians of literature such as Anthony Kaldellis, that the Byzantines engaged in an intertextual dialogue with classical sources in composing their histories. More than this, knowledge of classical models was sufficiently well known that actions might emulate those of the ancients, for example in the renaming of cities and the staging of triumphs. The revival of classical learning saw the theology of victory developed to employ warrior saints in place of pagan deities and invocations for the aid of the Theotokos in a manner reminiscent of the Roman *evocatio*. But one might also highlight the developing notion of *baraka* among the principal enemies of the Byzantine emperors, the caliphs. In the words of James Turner Johnson:

> The *gazi* concept in Islamic tradition, from its first appearance in the Abbasids" effort to solidify their rule over the Ummayads through military success on the *Thugur*, the frontier with the Byzantine Empire, to the use of this same concept by the Turks on their westward movement, to the adoption of *gazi* as an imperial title by the Ottoman Sultans, should recognize something strikingly familiar, for the success of the *gazi,* the warrior, is conceived as a direct sign of God's *baraka*, the divine blessing and approval of the warrior's action.

The ghazi-caliph, the equivalent of the warrior emperor, emerged in Islamic thought with Harun al-Rashid, who came to power in 170/786 CE.[61] Harun is praised in court poetry for fighting in the frontier lands as caliph, not leaving this to his followers: "You visit [the infidels] in person each year/ Like one who restores ties with those who have severed them/ But you could if you liked resort to some pleasant place/ While others endured hardship instead of you".[62]

60 Noted by Kaldellis, "The original source for Tzimiskes' Balkan campaign", 46-7, esp. n. 54.

61 Turner Johnson, "Conclusion: a look back and a look forward", pp. 405-6, commenting on Stephenson, "Religious services for Byzantine soldiers and the possibility of martyrdom", pp. 25-46. See also Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy* War, pp. 99-106.

62 See also Sperl, "Islamic kingship and Arabic panegyric poetry in the early 9th century", pp. 20-35.

6 The Tragedy of Defeat

Although there were high points between, the 11th and 12th centuries, both ended badly for Byzantium, and those who wrote about the Byzantine emperors' deeds in war found traditional ways to describe this, articulating a theology of defeat. Michael Attaleiates' analysis of the campaign in 1071 that ended in disaster at Mantzikert is a case in point. Attaleiates' narrative is structured around a series of omens, escalating in significance, all connected to the decisions taken by the emperor. As Romanos IV Diogenes set sail, a dove "not completely white, but mostly dark" landed in the emperor's hands (20.2). While staying in Helenopolis, which was punningly called Eleeinopolis ("Pitiful City"), an imperial tent pole collapsed (20.3). In Anatolikon, a fire broke out in the houses the emperor had commandeered, devouring imperial horses, tackle, carriages and weapons, "proof that everything contains a predictive power" (20.5). The emperor's swift quashing of a potential rebellion by Germanic mercenaries, and his merciful treatment of the rebels is reported but not accorded predictive significance (20.7), unlike the sight of Roman corpses on the road from Sebasteia (20.8). The omens are related directly to imperial choices, which they reveal to have been poor: landing at "Eleeinpolis" rather than the usual Pylai or Nea Kome; commandeering flammable houses apart from the main military encampment; taking the wrong road out of Sebasteia, knowing that an army had been defeated there the previous year. At Theodosioupolis, Romanos made another choice, to divide his army, sending the greater part under Trachaneiotes to attack Chliat, while he and the smaller part captured the city of Mantzikert. "For this reason, then, his unit of the army was not unreasonable nor inconsistent with strategic thinking, yet still some divine wrath or ineffable reason reversed the outcome ... the sultan arrived without any warning" (20.12). The outcome of the battle, defeat and the capture of the emperor was determined by three incidents that took place in Mantzikert. First, a soldier accused of stealing an ass was afforded no mercy by the emperor when he begged and "invoked the intercession of the most revered image of our glorious lady, the Mother of God of Blachernai, the image which usually accompanies the faithful emperors on their campaigns as an invincible weapon". Instead, "with the icon itself held aloft, the wretch had his nose cut off". Attaleiates, who was present at the event, observes: "At the time this struck me as ominous, and I felt some great vengeance would come upon us from God" (20.14). Second, and still unaware that the sultan's own army was upon them, Romanos addressed his troops to prepare them for battle and had a priest offer a gospel reading. Attaleiates quotes selectively from the service, including the line: "Indeed the hour is coming when whoever kills you will

think he is offering service to God" (John 16:2). Professing once more: "I was personally present at these events", he observed that "some believed deep in their hearts that the verses to be recited would indicate the outcome of the present undertaking", and that having heard them, "deduced that the recited passage was infallible in its prediction of the future" (20.15). Attaleiates does not observe that verses from John 15:17-16:2 were regularly read at the feasts of martyrs, so the troops would have heard them with great frequency. Third, when Romanos received envoys from the sultan and sent them away, he gave them an imperial cross to ensure their safe passage through his lines when they returned with the sultan's response. "But without realizing it, he had handed victory to the enemy along with the victorious sign. This at any rate is the opinion of those who study such matters. For when everything was set for battle he should not have handed over such a symbol of victory to the foe" (20.21).[63] These, then, were the last of Romanos' *hamartiai*, the errors in judgement that resulted in tragedy.

As a consequence of Mantzikert and its aftermath, the interior of Anatolia fell rapidly to the Seljuk Turks. Efforts to recover this land led to the summoning of Christian fighters from the West, who arrived in their tens of thousands on what would be called Crusades. A century later, a Byzantine emperor would launch what has been called his own Crusade, although this characterization is neither necessary nor wholly accurate.[64] In 1176 Manuel I Komnenos mustered a huge army, with its baggage train stretching for ten miles, and led it through the Maiander valley toward Ikonion. In the vicinity of the deserted fortress of Myriokephalon it was ambushed in a pass known as Tzivritze, and although the vanguard forced its way to higher ground, the baggage train was trapped as the main force of Turks fell on its right wing, under Baldwin of Antioch. Manuel fought his way out to reach the vanguard and once the battle had concluded, in defeat he was offered and accepted generous terms. The only part of the imperial army to suffer heavy losses in the campaign was Baldwin's contingent, so the battle did not end Manuel's ambitions in the east. However, it greatly damaged the emperor's reputation.

Niketas Choniates recounts the events of 1176, and in doing so suggests that the failure was pre-ordained, since the emperor had been abandoned by the Theotokos and the saints. In his pride, Manuel failed to heed warnings that his venture would end in tragedy. At the time he proposed the campaign, Manuel

63 This paragraph follows the translation, occasionally modified, in Kaldellis/Krallis, *The History. Michael Attaleiates*, pp. 261-303

64 See now Stouraitis, "Jihād and Crusade", pp. 42-9; Chrysos, "1176 – A Byzantine Crusade?", 81-6.

dreamt that as he boarded his ship the mountains of Europe and Asia collapsed and everything aboard the ship was lost, although he was able to swim to shore. Then, just before he left Constantinople, Manuel was approached by a man called Mauropolous, who had dreamt that upon entering a church dedicated to St Kyros, he heard a voice coming from an icon of the Theotokos, summoning first St George and then St Theodore to assist the emperor, who was in the greatest danger. But Mauropoulos was shocked to hear both George and Theodore decline Mary's instruction to help the emperor. As Choniates' observed, "it is difficult to protect mankind from the future and none can deliver us easily from the events that overtake us except the Deity, who, through our supplications, takes pity and turns aside perils".[65] The author is here surely looking ahead to the greater tragedy of 1204, which he recounts with such pathos.

The Crusades spelt the end both for Byzantium as an imperial power, and this survey offers no scope to address the period 1204-1453.[66] In the absence of a living emperor, after 1453, no Christian thought under Ottoman rule was wasted on an imperial theology of victory, and instead one finds an ideology of neo-martyrdom and suffering, thus restoring the premise of the ages of persecution that had preceded Constantine's conversion. The conqueror of Constantinople, who pulled down the bronze horse "and from the copper of those statues he had splendid canons made", was remembered in the Ottoman chronicle tradition as especially imbued with *baraka*, Mehmed Han Gazi.[67]

7 Conclusion

The imperial theology of victory was so potent and enduring because it was simple. The outcome of battle was not always so evident as in the examples we have chosen, but when it was clear then writers had a template to explain victory and defeat, and they had also countless models to follow, from tragedy and historiography, myth and Scripture, classical and Christian. Both in texts and images, which informed and illustrated the accomplishments of emperors, a series of motifs were drawn upon to secure and demonstrate divine favour. Most consistently and most potently this symbol was the trophy of the cross,

65 Kaldellis, "The original source for Tzimiskes' Balkan campaign", 51, draws attention to this passage and its inversion of the earlier tale in both Leo the Deacon and Skylitzes.

66 See now Synkellou, "Reflections on Byzantine "war ideology" in Late Byzantium", pp. 99-107.

67 Quoted in translation by Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror", 309.

stauros nikopoios, in its many forms, including battle standards and reliquaries containing fragments of the True Cross. The paradox of the Crucifixion, whereby defeat was the greater victory, precluded the possibility that the outcome of battle under the cross was not willed by God. Never without a cross, emperors at war increasingly relied on the Virgin, whose role was enhanced by her consolidation as the most powerful intercessor with the Lord. As the Theotokos she might offer protection to the imperial person, through her icons or relics, such as the *maphorion*, and she might summon the warrior saints, notably the Theodores and George, to his aid, even if occasionally they could be disinclined to answer her call.

It is important to note, by way of an ending, what the theology of victory was not, which is an ideology of "holy war" directed against an infidel. From the 7th to the 15th century, the principal enemies to the Christian Roman Empire lay to its east, a succession of Muslim caliphates and emirates, from Ummayads to Ottomans. We tend to think, therefore, that a clash of religions defined the war ideology of Byzantium, and this has been encouraged by the focus of many recent studies on "holy war". But as we have shown, the theology of victory was particularly potent at determining the outcome of battles with fellow Christians. Constantius demonstrated this against Magnentius, as did Theodosius I against Eugenius, although early Christian writers struggled to paint the defeated as pagans. Later examples of Christians fighting Christians abound, for example the war against the Christian Bulgarian Tsar Symeon, to whom Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos wrote commending an end to the spilling of Christian blood even as he was sure that the Romans would prevail.[68] The same Symeon would be met by Romanos I with similar words when he came out of Constantinople wearing the *maphorion*, the robe of the Theotokos, under his armour to negotiate a peace treaty.[69] The theology of victory, both

68 Nicholas Mystikos, *Letters*, ed. R.J.H. Jenkins and L.G. Westerink, Washington, DC 1973, pp. 89-93, which is referred to among many examples by Stouraitis, "Just War" and "Holy War"", pp. 236-7.

69 Theophanes Continuatus, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB, Bonn 1838, 405-8, where it is also recorded that Romanos spoke in a manner echoing Nicholas Mystikos' words: "It is said the emperor spoke thus to Symeon: "I have heard you are a pious man and a true Christian, but I see deeds which do not match those words. For it is the nature of the pious man and Christian to embrace peace and love, since God is and is called love. It is the nature of an impious man lacking faith to delight in slaughters and the unjust spilling of blood. If therefore you truly are a Christian, as we have been assured, stop now the unjust slaughters and bloodletting of the profane, and make peace with us Christians, being the very Christian you are called, and not wishing to defile the right hands of Christians with the blood of similarly faithful Christians".

in its original and its in Christianized form, was a particularly effective device for explaining the outcomes of civil wars. This had been the case through the 3rd century, culminating in Constantine's wars with his fellow Tetrarchs. Herakleios wielded the icon of the Theotokos against Phokas and subsequently, post-facto, the True Cross against the Persians, while Leo III and Constantine V brandished the cross just as effectively against iconodules as they did their foes on the battlefield. To this might be added other instances, for example when Michael II and Theophilos faced down Thomas the Slav with fragments of the True Cross and the *maphorion*, or when Basil II confronted the rebel Bardas Phokas wielding the an icon of the Theotokos. Even victories over the infidel, such as John Tzimiskes' victories against the Rus, can be read as elements in a civil war, namely as the legitimation of John's usurpation following his murder of Nikephoros Phokas.

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CHAPTER 2

State War Ethic and Popular Views on Warfare

Yannis Stouraitis

When Constantine I (306-337) came to power, the Roman Empire had already several centuries earlier abandoned the war policies of large-scale territorial expansion – the last wars of the kind being those of Emperor Trajan (98-117) in the early 2nd century. The imperial power's major political concern was the maintenance of the so-called *pax romana* which was primarily identified with the preservation of centralized rule over a vast territorial Empire, the *imperium romanum*. Late Roman approaches to the *ius ad bellum* were circumscribed by the notion of justified warfare for the perpetuation of imperial rule over a –by pre-modern standards – fairly stable territory. The Roman concept of justified warfare included preventive or retaliation measures against enemies on the Empire's vast frontiers in order to avoid potential attacks or to punish foreign peoples that raided imperial territory. Within this political framework, the first wars whose justification is related to the Christian religion were the civil wars between Constantine I and his co-emperors in search of monocracy.[1] These wars played a fundamental role in the fusion of Roman and Christian ideals by the reformulation of the Roman war ethic.

Constantine's battle against Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge (28 October 312) is the first reported military event, in which Christian symbols played a major role in the symbolic legitimization of warfare. The factuality of the reports of Christian authors regarding the emperor's famous vision that allegedly urged him to use the military standard known as the labarum[2] in order to underpin the morale of his army before battle has been approached with due caution,[3] whereas Constantine's Christian beliefs during the civil wars are a matter of debate. In the present, there is a predominant tendency among scholars to regard the emperor's conversion to Christianity as a gradual process.[4]

1 For an account of the "civil wars" of the tetrarchy with bibliographical references, see Lenski, "The Reign of Constantine", pp. 61-77; cf. Stephenson, *Constantine*, pp. 113-82.

2 This standard bore the so-called Christ monogram, the chi-rho, a sign based on a combination of the Greek letters chi (X) and rho (P) from the initials of the Greek word ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ (Christ); Eusebius, *Vita Constantinii*, ed. Winkelmann, I 31, 1.

3 Cf. Stephenson, *Constantine*, pp. 134-38, 182-89.

4 DePalma-Digeser, *The Making of a Christian Empire*, *passim*; cf. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change*, pp. 277-91.

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In a world where religious syncretism was the norm and emperors as military leaders constantly needed to appeal to a divine power for legitimacy and support in the traditional context of Roman theology of imperial victory, Constantine had apparently already recognized a manifestation of the *summus deus* (superior God) in the Christian God by 312. His favourable stance toward the Christian religion, as was made evident in all his actions of toleration and support of the Christian church thereafter,[5] along with his closer contact with Christian intellectuals that became members of his court, such as Lactantius,[6] point to an authentic interest in the new religion. This interest seems to have turned into full-scale conviction from 324 onwards, when his assertion as sole autocrat over the Empire due to his military triumphs against his contenders had given him ample proof of the Christian God's superiority.

In this light, one should rather try to differentiate between the actual role that the Christian religion played in warfare during the time of the conflicts and the interest of both the emperor and Christian writers in creating a religiously-charged historical narrative about these wars retrospectively. The latter aimed at highlighting the role of Christianity in the justification of warfare in the context of an on-going process of the Christian religion's integration into Roman political ideology. With respect to the first issue, the employment of Christian symbols by the emperor, either since 312 or later during his war against Licinius in 323,[7] can hardly be seen as evidence that the elimination of paganism was the motive for and the goal of the civil wars. The use of Christian symbols by Constantine took place within a standardized framework of the sacralisation of Roman military activity.[8] The emperor incorporated new religious symbols in his common ritual practices of reserving divine support for himself and his army in warfare due to his openness towards the Christian God. This choice was certainly facilitated, if not motivated, by the presence of a Christian element in the army.

Recent research on the relationship between Christians and the Roman army has shed new light on the views of the Christian community on military service and warfare. The older views about a pacifist stance taken by the pre-Constantine Christian community, which a priori denounced warfare and propagated universal abstention of Christians from military service, have now

5 DePalma-Digeser, *The Making of a Christian Empire*, pp. 117-33.

6 Ibid., pp. 133-43.

7 Stephenson, *Constantine*, p. 186.

8 On the religious aspect of Roman warfare before Christianity, see Rüpke, *Domi Militiae*, pp. 97-198.

been convincingly put to rest.[9] Christians were well integrated into the Roman administrative apparatus long before Constantine's era and it was rather their presence in the army that, among other things, must have contributed to the emperor's turn towards this religion rather than vice versa.

However, this argument cannot overshadow the fact that Christians were still a small part of the Empire's population as well as of Constantine's army at the time of the conflicts.[10] In addition to that, it is a matter of debate whether Constantine I should be seen as a determined persecutor of paganism or rather as an emperor who pursued a balanced policy of relevant religious tolerance until the end of his reign.[11] Within this framework, one needs to consider that Roman soldiers, both Christians and non-Christians, were accustomed to following symbols and standards that the imperial power employed to configure the army's common identity and to enhance solidarity on the battlefield. The Christian symbols introduced by the emperor for the imperial regiment around him[12] probably symbolized for the majority of the soldiers another military cult which they could interpret differently according to their own religious disposition.[13] All this calls for caution when it comes to the actual role of the Christian religion in justifying and motivating these civil wars as religious warfare. The main ideological trigger of these wars was political and referred to Constantine's goal to become sole autocrat.[14]

The religious discourse through which Christian ecclesiastical historiography sought to circumscribe the moral legitimacy of the civil wars must be interpreted under the prism of the socio-political environment that produced it. The process of integration of the Christian religion into imperial political ideology, which began under Constantine and was corroborated by his cumulatively positive attitude towards Christendom, did not take place in a socio-political vacuum. In working Christianity's way up into the Roman power structures, Christian intellectuals stood in clear competition with pagan beliefs and their representatives in the higher echelons of Roman society due to Christian monotheism's inherent inclination to spiritual exclusiveness. A privileged ground on which this ideological struggle was to be decisively carried out was that concerning the relationship between religion and imperial

9 See the ground-breaking paper by Brennecke, "Frühchristliches Bekenntnis", pp. 45-100; cf. Shean, *Soldiering for God*, pp. 71-215.

10 10-15% of the whole population in this period, cf. Stark R., *Cities of God*, pp. 67-8; Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, p. 73.

11 DePalma-Digeser, *The Making of a Christian Empire*, pp. 125-33.

12 Eusebius, *Vita Constantinii*, ed. Winkelmann, I 37, 1.

13 Cf. Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, pp. 265-6.

14 Cf. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, pp. 154-91.

warfare, as the debate between pagan and Christian intellectuals in the previous centuries had already made clear.[15]

The pioneer of a Roman-Christian political theology, Eusebius, was well aware that warfare as a political means was a *sine qua non* for the promotion of the imperial power's interests within and beyond the frontiers of the Empire. Constantine I's increasing affection towards Christianity during the civil wars and his final victory provided a unique momentum. This favoured the configuration of a propagandistic image of the Christian God as a powerful aide of the sole legitimate Roman emperor on the battlefield and an image of the emperor as a protector of the Christian community within a still predominately pagan Empire. Eusebius undertook this task and constructed an ideological narrative that promoted Christendom's claim to an exclusive relationship with the imperial power. His writings set the framework of a normative approach to the role of Christian religion in the justification of Roman imperial warfare, which was adopted by later Christian authors that used him as a source.[16]

Constantine's military triumph over Licinius was, according to Eusebius, the means that enabled this emperor to form one united Roman Empire as of old, bringing under his irenic rule the whole Oecumene from East to West and from North to South.[17] The ecclesiastical author constructed an archetypical Roman-Christian war ethic, according to which warfare was justified in the name of the – now divinely-ordained – *pax romana*. Thereafter, the Christian-Roman notion of peace was identified with the Roman emperor's autocratic rule over the territories of the Roman Oecumene.[18]

The formulation of a Christian ideological idiom that justified Roman military violence was facilitated by the political pragmatism of the New Testament, in which warfare is represented as a legitimate political means in the secular sphere.[19] Moreover, Eusebius was able to draw extensively on the inherent militarism of the Old Testament for religious motifs and symbols in order to highlight the role of divine judgement in the ethical legitimacy of imperial warfare. This discourse presented the Christian God as the ultimate source of legitimacy for the state's war policies by explicitly articulating God's active sup-

15 Brennecke, "Frühchristliches Bekenntnis", pp. 62-3.

16 For Eusebius' work as a normative model for later ecclesiastical historians, see DePalma-Digeser, *The Making of a Christian Empire*, pp. 130-1.

17 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. G. Bardy, *Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique*, vol. III (Sources Chrétiennes 55), Paris 1958, X 9, 6.

18 Byzantine authors reproduced this model many centuries later, cf. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 16.

19 Brennecke, "Frühchristliches Bekenntnis", pp. 47-56.

port to the Roman emperor's political program of maintenance and restoration of imperial peace through war.

However, this retrospective representation of Constantine's civil wars as a struggle on behalf of the Christians had little to do with the configuration of a Roman ideology of "holy war" that made religious difference a determining factor of the decision to go to war or, for that matter, turned warfare into a sacral means for the expansion of Christianity.[20] Instead, Eusebius' main concern at the time was to highlight the fully-fledged politicization of the Christian religion and its capacity to support the project of Roman imperial rule in order to be promoted as the sole religion of the Roman power elite. The key concept in shaping this ideological idiom was peace as a common value which promoted an identification of divine will with the Roman emperors' political interests. For this reason, Eusebius was even keen on incorporating the wars of the pagan emperor Augustus in his narrative in order to relate the process of political unification and pacification of different peoples under Roman imperial rule with the event of Christ's birth.[21] The retrospective legitimization of the establishment of the pagan Roman world-rule as a sign of divine ordainment was intended to entrench the Christian-Roman religious-political axiom about one God in Heaven and one emperor on earth. The latter could now be regarded as the former's secular representative, commissioned to fight wars for the sake of maintenance of the divinely-ordained peace. This new ideological scheme corresponded with the need of the imperial power as well as the Christian religion's inherent need for political and spiritual exclusiveness, respectively.

1 The Christianization of the Roman War Ethic

In the course of the 4th century, the politicization of Christendom was consolidated through the socio-political role of the Christian bishops and the growing resonance of the Christian religion among the Empire's populations.[22] The

20 On the argument that Eusebius' writings provided the ideological background for the later development of a Byzantine concept of "holy war", see Kolia-Dermitzaki, *Ο βυζαντινός «ιερός πόλεμος»*, pp. 118-25.

21 Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica*, ed. K. Mras, *Eusebius Werke, Band 8: Die Praeparatio evangelica* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 43) I 4, 4-5; Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica*, ed. I.A. Heikel, *Eusebius Werke, Band 6: Die Demonstratio evangelica* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 23), Leipzig 1913, VII 2, 22, VIII 1, 16, IX 17, 18.

22 Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, pp. 103-9, 235-440; Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, pp. 274-89; Stark, *Cities of God*, p. 67.

edict of Thessalonica in 380 that instigated all Roman subjects to follow the Christian confession sealed the triumph of Christian monotheism over pagan polytheism in the struggle for religious exclusiveness at the level of the imperial power. By this time, the justification of imperial warfare was not only extensively articulated through a Christian discourse, but it had also become an object of Christian intellectual thought.

The writings of the bishop of Milan, Ambrose, regarding Gratian's defensive wars against the Germanic peoples at the northern border of the Roman Oecumene provide an interesting insight. The older prerogative of "Greco-Roman" politico-cultural superiority as opposed to barbarian inferiority that legitimized the pacifying Roman military activity in the Oecumene was now re-articulated and refined in religious terms. For Ambrose, political legitimacy and religious orthodoxy went together. The legitimate ruler that could receive God's aid on the battlefield should not simply be Christian, but also orthodox. In his treatise *De fide christiana*, addressed to Gratian during the latter's wars against the Goths on the Danube frontier, he justified imperial warfare through the principle of defence of the Christian-Roman *patria* against the heretic barbarians.[23] He also highlighted the heresy of Arianism as the main reason that had led to the catastrophic defeat of the eastern emperor Valens in the battle of Adrianople against the Goths (378).[24]

Ambrose's pupil, St Augustine of Hippo, elaborated this line of thought. His approach to just war (*bellum iustum*) went beyond the concrete political needs of a certain state or political order, bearing influences from Cicero's thought as well as from neo-platonic philosophy.[25] In Augustine's view, just war was defined by the notions of *causa iusta* (just cause), *legitima auctoritas* (legitimate power) and *recta intentio* (right intention).[26] The religious-political prerogative that made divinely-ordained peace the ultimate end of war circumscribed the notion of right intention. The declaration of just war was exclusively a prerogative of a legitimate power, that is, of the God-chosen head of a state or a people. The notion of just cause for resorting to military force was not strictly constrained by the state's political needs, but referred to the broader and, therefore, also more abstract concept of *ulcisci iniurias* (avenging injustice). The abstract notion of defence of a righteous order enabled the ref-

23 St Ambrose, *On Faith*, ed. A. Fäller, *Santi Ambrosii, Opera, pars VIII, De fide* (*ad Gratianum Augustum*), Vindobona 1962, II 14, 136-43, II 16, 141-43.

24 Mattox, *Saint Augustine*, p. 19.

25 Ibid., pp. 14-43.

26 Russel, *Just War*, pp. 21-3; Mattox, *Saint Augustine*, pp. 44-59.

erence to divine will as a just cause *per se* for resorting to military action.[27] This demonstrates the deviation of his thought from the traditional Roman political framework in which the norms of justified warfare were fully subordinate to the needs of Roman statecraft. This deviation paved the way for new approaches to the role of religion in providing a just cause for war in the western post-Roman medieval world.

Conversely, the bishop of Caesarea St Basil adopted a more restrictive view on the relationship between warfare and religion. According to him, killing in battle was forgiven when it took place in defence of piety and prudence. Nevertheless, he advised Christian soldiers to abstain from the Holy Communion for three years.[28] This was his reaction to the more flexible approach of the bishop of Alexandria, Athanasios, declared in a letter addressed to a monk named Amun – the central topic of which was adultery – that, contrary to murder, killing in battle was lawful and praiseworthy, because something that on one occasion is not sustainable may be permissible in another situation and forgiven due to the circumstances.[29] Contrary to what has often been premised, Basil's canon does not reflect a pacifist stance. It is rather pervaded by a spirit of ecclesiastical *oikonomia* (norm lenience)[30] that acknowledges warfare as a necessity and accepts Christian participation in it. The proposed chastisement for the Christian soldiers in form of burdensome, but not compulsory, advice is here intended to make it clear that participation in warfare, even though unavoidable in socio-political terms and thus forgiven, could nevertheless not be considered as a spiritual act of religious piety. Athanasios' statement is also grounded on the same prerogative of ecclesiastical *oikonomia*. Unlike Basil the Great, whose main concern was to separate warfare from religious spirituality, Athanasius' priority was to highlight the recognition of participation in warfare as a public service that brought honour to those that undertook it. His statement reflects the pragmatic approach of the Church to the Empire's socio-political reality of war. Nonetheless, it hardly contradicts the ideological core of St Basil's argument, since he equally regarded warfare as a sin that was exceptionally forgiven.[31]

27 *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Quaestionum in Heptateuchum libri VII* (Corpus Christianorum, ser. lat. 33, pars 5), Turnholt 1958, VI 20; cf. Russel, *Just War*, p. 20.

28 Saint Basile, *Lettres II*, ed. Y. Courtonne, Paris 1961, 188, 13, 1-5.

29 *Athanasii archiepiscopi Alexandriae epistola ad Amunem monachum*, in: P.P. Joannou, *Fonti. Fasciolo IX. Discipline générale antique* (*II-IX s.*). *Les canons des pères grecs*, vol. II, Rome 1963, 68, 4-14.

30 Cupane, "Appunti", pp. 53-73; Dagron, "La règle et l'exception", pp. 1-18.

31 Stouraitis, *Krieg und Frieden*, pp. 353-56; Idem, "Methodologische Überlegungen", pp. 283-84.

The fine differences between Augustine and the eastern Church fathers in their understanding of the role of religion and the divine in the justification of war demonstrate that the process of politicization of Christian monotheism after Constantine I hardly produced a common monolithic approach to justifiable warfare within the Christian community. Considering this, along with the fact that a large part of the Empire's population remained pagan up to the late 5th century, the actual impact of Christianization on Roman imperial war policies must be addressed with caution. Certainly, the contribution of Christian monotheism provided enough of a motive for social conflict and violence as is demonstrated, for instance, by the conflicts between pagans, Jews and Christians in early 5th century Alexandria.[32] However, at the level of the imperial state, the role of religion in the Roman *ius ad bellum* remained constrained by the norms of Roman statecraft.

After the promulgation of Christendom as the polity's official religion under Theodosius I, the treatment of Christian populations by Persian rule appears as a new legal-political aspect of the diplomatic contacts between the two Empires. The status of Christian subjects in the Persian Empire and of Zoroastrians under Roman rule seems to have become an issue of interstate relations.[33] Within this framework, Christian writers of the first half of the 5th century promoted an image of the Christian community as an institutional part of the Roman state that served as a pretext for war against the Persians.

In the accounts of Christian authors, Constantine I's unfulfilled plan to invade Persia in 337 was religiously coloured and related to the emperor's intention to function as the protector of the Christians in the Persian Empire.[34] Nonetheless, the main evidence of this is a letter from Constantine to Shapur II, delivered by Eusebius, whose authenticity is a matter of debate[35] and which – as has been shown – was written much earlier than the last years of Constantine's reign.[36] Both its date and its content cannot support the argument that Constantine prepared for a war whose principal justifying cause was the protection of the persecuted Christians of Persia.[37] Almost a century later,

32 Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, pp. 21-143.

33 Stoyanov, *Defenders*, pp. 40-41.

34 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, ed. Winkelmann, IV 9-13; Sozomen, *Church History*, eds. J.Bidez /G.C. Hansen, *Sozomenus. Kirchengeschichte* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 50), Berlin 1960, II, 15; cf. Barnes, *Constantine*, pp. 258-59.

35 Frendo, "Constantine's Letter to Shapur II", pp. 57-69.

36 Smith, *Constantine and the Captive Christians of Persia*, pp. 17-44.

37 A speech by Libanius dated to 344/45 presents as a justifying cause for the war the fact that the Persians had misused an agreement concerning the import of iron ore from Roman territory. Instead of using it to make weapons to fight other barbarians, they had

the protection of the persecuted Christian community in Persia was again presented as the main motive behind Thedosius II's decision to go to war in 421.[38] However, the effort of Socrates Scholasticus to propagate religious fervour as the cause of the war cannot overshadow the fact that the Persian initiative to withhold the goods of Roman merchants and to prevent Roman gold miners that had worked in Persia to return to the Empire provided the main political motive and justifying argument for the campaign.[39]

In this period, the flourishing genre of ecclesiastical historiography favoured the systematic employment of Christian discourse that borrowed motifs from the Old Testament and contemporary hagiography in the representation of Roman warfare. Nonetheless, beyond textual rhetoric, the conduct of war between the Romans and their major rival, the Zoroastrian Persian Empire, remained constrained by the interests of Roman statecraft and was motivated and justified by the breach of bilateral agreements or by claims of honour and authority over a broader frontier zone; not by ideals of expansionary religious militarism. This is verified by the fact that the only Roman emperor who actually launched a major offensive against Persia in this period was the pagan emperor Julian (360-363). According to Ammianus Marcellinus, his aim was to avenge past Persian victories.[40]

The merging of the Roman political tradition of justified war with a religion that did not propagate warfare as a legitimate means for the worldwide domination of Christian law did not favour the formulation of a doctrine of "holy war" that would target the enemy and motivate war against him on the grounds of religious difference, aiming at the expansion and prevalence of the own religion. In the process of conflation of Christian religious and Roman political ideology it was the vision of religious community that was subordinated to the vision of political community and not vice versa.

The potential of Christianity to adapt to the political and military needs of the imperial ruling elite and to be fully integrated into the religious practices of the army provided the Roman imperial power with a new powerful proto-ideology that transcended social strata. This ideology could be employed to enhance solidarity on the battlefield as well as to refine ethically the discourse

used it to arm heavy cavalry and attack the Empire; Libanius, *Orations*, R. Foerster, *Libanii opera*, vol. 4, Leipzig 1908, 59, 66-73.

38 Socrates, *Church History*, ed. P. Maraval/P. Périchon, *Socrate de Constantinople, Histoire ecclésiastique* (*Livres I-VII*), Paris 2004-2007, VII 18.

39 Ibid.

40 *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt*, ed. W. Seyfarth, Leipzig 1978, XXII 12, 1-2; cf. Ibid. XXIII 4-5.

of the legitimacy of Roman military policies. Nevertheless, on a social level the politicization of Christendom hardly contributed to an increased militarization of Roman society or provided new opportunities for the recruitment of soldiers among the Empire's population.

The so-called process of 'barbarization' of the Roman army during the 4th and the 5th centuries, even though it should not be exaggerated,[41] is an indication that the fusion of state and religion hardly provided the growing numbers of Christians within the Empire with an extra motive to join the army and fight on behalf of the Christian-Roman Empire. A significant part of the army in this period was recruited among the "barbarian" federates, in particular the Germans,[42] whose Christianization contributed to their swifter integration into the Roman army. The growing spirit of Christian-Roman patriotism in the discourse of the Church elite[43] hardly enhanced the *de facto* weak sense of Roman "patriotism" among provincial masses in the context of a vast imperial state.[44]

2 Justinian I and the Concept of Roman Reconquista

After the cataclysmic event of the loss of the Empire's western parts during the 5th century, the emperor of Constantinople remained the sole Roman emperor over a territorially contracted Empire. Justinian I's (527-565) wars of restoration in the West almost a century later were rather the result of imperial opportunism rather than of a grand-strategic plan of ecumenical war policies.[45] Nonetheless, they shaped the concept of divinely-sanctioned Roman reconquest based on the idea of liberation of former Roman territories from barbarian rule.

The conclusion of a peace agreement with Persia in 532 enabled Justinian I to turn his attention to the West. The unexpected success of Belisarius in swiftly reconquering North Africa from the Vandals in 533 provided the ground for the formulation of a full-blown doctrine of just war of reconquest that ideologically underpinned the Roman intervention in Italy and Spain. This doctrine

41 Lee, *War*, pp. 79-85.

42 Liebeshuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, pp. 1-16.

43 Shean, *Soldiering for God*, pp. 301-4.

44 Liebeschuetz, "Citizen status", p. 136.

45 Heather, *The Restoration of Rome*, pp. 137-53; Meier, *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians*, pp. 165-180.

appeared for the first time in a passage of the Codex Iustinianus. The emperor declared that Africa had received her freedom and the people of so many provinces had been liberated thanks to God's favourable stance towards his servants. Moreover, he expressed his hope that God would aid his most humble servants to restore everything that had been taken from the Empire.[46]

Justinian's ideology was founded on the old Roman notion of retaking things which had been wrongly taken that made the justice of the war cause dependent upon the interests of the political entity. At the same time, divine approval was propagated as the ultimate source of justice, reference to which was now a *sine qua non* in order to legitimize military activity ethically. This legitimacy was underpinned by the notion of religious orthodoxy. Christian-Roman just war was circumscribed by the right intention of restoring peace, which in contemporary Roman thought was identified with the restoration of the politically and religiously legitimate authority of the sole Roman emperor in the world, the emperor of Constantinople.

This normative ideological scheme informed also Procopius' official approach to these wars. According to the author, the heretical (Arian) Vandals had torn North Africa from Roman rule due to the negligence of emperor Valentinian III.[47] The peace agreement between the eastern Roman imperial power and the Vandal king Geiseric in 474 had helped to stop Vandal aggression, but it neither legitimized Vandal rule over North Africa nor represented the desired form of peace. To make this latter point clear, the author highlighted the indigenous population's sufferings under the Vandal rule that were aggravated by the new rulers' allegiance to the heresy of Arianism.[48] The overthrow of the tolerant Vandal ruler Gilderich through Gelimer provided the pretext for the campaign. Procopius' report on the religious arguments that Justinian employed to overcome dissenting views in the imperial court regarding the endeavour's feasibility[49] testifies to the central role of religious discourse in the ethical legitimization of imperial warfare. In Belisar's discourse during the campaign the key ideological idiom was *libertas*.[50] The liberation of north African indigenous populations from the tyrannical (both in political and religious terms) rule of the Vandals was propagated as a just cause that guarantied

46 *Codex Justinianus*, ed. S.P. Scott, *The Civil Law*, Cincinnati 1932, I 27.

47 Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Wirth/Haury, III 2, 5, III 3, 12.

48 Ibid. III 7, 26, III 5, 11-17, III 8, 3-4.

49 Ibid. III 9, 9, III 10, 4-21.

50 Brodka, "Procopius von Kaisareia", pp. 244, 247.

God's aid on the battlefield.[51] Belisar is reported to have appealed to the former status of these populations as Roman subjects to claim their support.[52]

The murder of the legitimate regent Amalasuntha by Theodohad provided the necessary pretext for the war against the Goths in Italy (535-554).[53] In Justinian's *Novella* of the year 536, Italy's military subjugation was justified as a restoration of legitimate Roman authority and peace. The emperor declared that God had not only granted the Romans with the enjoyment of peace and the subjugation of the Vandals, the Alani, and the Moors, as well as the recovery of all Africa and Sicily. He had also inspired them with the vision to bring under their rule the other countries which the Romans had lost due to their negligence after they had first extended the boundaries of their Empire to the shores of both oceans.[54]

Even though the Gothic rule in Italy, contrary to the Vandal rule in Africa, had not been oppressive toward Chalcedonian Christians, Justinian employed once more the argument of religious orthodoxy in order to underpin the legitimacy of the Roman imperial power's claim on autocratic rule over former Roman territory, as his letter to the Franks testifies.[55] On the battlefield, Belisar, who led the first phase of the Roman offensive, employed the *libertas*-ideal to justify the war. Procopius reports on a dialogue between the Roman general and a Gothic delegation, in which two different discourses of justification were juxtaposed. According to the Goths, the Romans waged an unjust war, since they had attacked friends and allies who had been assigned by the Roman emperor to free Italy from the tyrant Odoacer and had respected the religious and other rights of the local population.[56] According to Belisar's response, the Goths had not been authorized by the Roman emperor to keep Italy under their own rule but to free it from the tyrant and return it to its legitimate ruler.[57]

These contrasting discourses provide an interesting insight into the ideological and socio-political dimension of Roman military policies. The justifying discourse of liberation in Italy, as presented by Procopius, demonstrates qualitative differences compared to the Vandal war. With the exception of the citizens of Rome, Belisar referred to the rest of the people as *Italiotes* (Italians),

51 Ibid. III 19, 5-6.

52 Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Wirth/Haury, III 20, 19.

53 Ibid. V 3-4.

54 Justinian, Novels, ed. R Schöll/W. Kroll, *Corpus Iuris Civilis 3: Novellae et Edicta*, 5th edition, Berlin 1928, Nov. XXX 11, 2.

55 Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Wirth/Haury, V 5, 8-10.

56 Ibid. VI 6, 14-21.

57 Ibid. VI 6, 22-27, 30-1

thus subtly abandoning the discourse of liberation of former Roman subjects.[58] This change of discourse was informed by two facts: first, the Gothic rule had been tolerant. Second, part of the indigenous population openly resisted reintegration into the Roman imperial order. Procopius reports that the citizens of Naples rejected Belisar's call for liberation and preferred to fight on the side of their Gothic rulers against the Roman emperor's army.[59] It is reported that the citizens of Naples highlighted their Roman identity in a non-regnal sense (i.e. not as loyalty to a Roman polity under centralized imperial rule), as an argument against the legitimacy of the Roman army's reconquering activity. On the other hand, Belisar employed a normative discourse according to which the citizens of Naples and all other Italians (*Italiotes*) were to regain their Roman identity, as members of the superior Roman political order, after their subordination to imperial rule through the Roman army's liberating activity.[60]

This incident demonstrates that the ideology of just war of reconquest needs to be addressed with caution when it comes to ethno-political perceptions of imperial warfare by the indigenous populations in former Roman territories.[61] Contrary to the image of a liberating imperial intervention, which the Constantinopolitan power elite propagated, common people had to face the destructive consequences of warfare that altered their lived peace, and not necessarily for the better. This is made evident in Procopius' subtle critique regarding the aftermath of Justinian's war policies. For the historian, these wars did not achieve the desired peaceful order, in whose name they had been justified, for they had led to protracted conflicts that caused additional suffering and new problems to local populations.[62]

3 Heraclius and the Sacralization of Defence

Justinian I's restoration proved to be ephemeral, since by the beginning of the 7th century Constantinople had again lost control over large parts of Italy due to the Lombard invasion, whereas the Visigoths eventually recovered those small parts of Spain that had returned to Byzantine rule.[63] In the Balkans, the

58 Ibid. v 8, 13.

59 Ibid. v 8, 7-42.

60 Cf. Stouraitis, "Just War", pp. 260-61.

61 Cf. Kouroumali, "The Justinianic Reconquest", pp. 969-99; for a counter-argument, Moorhead, "Italian Loyalties during Justinian's Gothic Wars", pp. 575-96.

62 Brodka, "Prokopius von Kaisareia", pp. 251-53.

63 On the aftermath of Justinian I's wars, see Maas M., "Roman Questions, Byzantine Answers", pp. 10-13.

Empire was under the pressure of immigrating Slavic and Turkic peoples. The usurpation of the imperial throne by the centurion Phokas in 602 provided the Persian Empire with the necessary pretext to wage a war that by 616 had deprived the Empire of Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt. Anatolia was a theatre of Persian raids while Avars and Slavs put pressure on the Romans in the Balkans.[64]

Emperor Heraclius, who deposed Phokas in 610, urgently needed to take action against the Persian offensive. Both his civil war against Phokas and the war in the East were characterized by practices of sacralisation. The religious dimension of the Persian war has been a subject of debate as to whether it should be categorized as a Byzantine "holy war"[65] or not.[66] The former view is mainly based on two speeches that Heraclius addressed to his army. In the first speech during the campaign of 624, the emperor said that the undertaken danger was not without recompense but rather led to eternal life.[67] In the following year, the emperor expressed the wish that his soldiers receive the crown of martyrdom.[68]

According to the history of Theophylact Simokattes, the notion that fallen Roman soldiers should hope for an afterlife was not an innovation of Heraclius, but had already been uttered by general Justinian in a harangue before the battle of Melitene against the Persians in 572.[69] However, Simokattes' report must be approached with caution, since the content of the harangue may represent nothing more than an invention of the court author who was writing during the late 620s and was trying to adapt his narrative to the mentality of the time.[70] This poses the question as to the literary character of the harangues that are reported in historiographical texts or panegyrics.

From a practical point of view, a general's speech before some thousand soldiers was certainly not the main means to transmit ideological messages to the army, since the majority of the soldiers would not have heard or understood the speech.[71] The authors of Byzantine military treatises were aware of

64 Kaegi, *Heraclius*, pp. 65-99.

65 Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 104; Kolia-Dermitzaki, *O βυζαντινός «ιερός πόλεμος»*, pp. 169f.; Ball, *Rome in the East*, pp. 28f; Howard-Johnston, Witnesses, p. 447.

66 Kaegi, *Heraclius*, p. 126; Stoyanov, *Defenders*, pp. 25-44, 60-74; Stouraitis, "Just War", pp. 244-45.

67 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 307.

68 Giorgio di Pisidia, *Heraclias*, ed. Pertusi, I 279; cf. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, pp. 310-11.

69 Simokattes, *Historia*, ed. C. de Boor /P. Wirth, *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae*, Stuttgart 1972, III 13, 5-7.

70 Cf. the analysis in Stoyanov, *Defenders*, p. 43.

71 Lilie, "Reality and Invention", p. 208.

that and explicitly advised the generals to avoid speeches before the whole army, but to have their subaltern officers speak to the units in the days before battle.[72] The most effective mechanism for the exhortation of the soldiers was that of the heralds that animated the soldiers per *bandon* (smaller army subunit) with short clear-cut messages in different languages before battle. Therefore, even if Heraclius did hold the reported speeches in the Greek *koine* in front of his polyethnic and polyglot force[73] of no fewer than 40,000 or 30,000 men,[74] this was nothing more than a mere symbolic act.

Moreover, one needs to consider that such military harangues, which have come down to us in epics, histories or chronicles, mainly represent literary reconstructions of well-educated authors, the content of which was often fully invented.[75] These authors were able to draw from a rich textual tradition of biblical motifs in order to accentuate the justice of the imperial war cause within the framework of a theocentric mentality. In this context, if Pisides was able to draw information for his poems from dispatches sent back from the battlefield, his rhetorically-charged narrative of the war needs to be approached as a reconstructed and literarily elaborated version of the ideas that circulated on the battlefield.

Pisides' aim was not simply to provide a detailed report on what the emperor said on the battlefield. His discourse fully instrumentalized the eschatological beliefs of this period in order to capitalize on the emperor's war successes and to propagate a political theology intended to entrench Heraclius' image as a divinely-chosen saviour of the Empire.[76] This is certainly not to say that we should dismiss the historicity of the circulation of an idea of afterlife for fallen soldiers on the battlefield. It means, however, that we should rather deprive this message of the literary context of Pisides' text for a more balanced approach to its content and function on the battlefield. The latter referred to the emperor's intention to strengthen the morale and improve the efficiency of his soldiers by addressing their fear of death.

Even though it is hard to document the soldiers' actual perception of such a message, any interpretative approach should take certain facts into

72 *Strategikon*, ed. G.T. Dennis/transl. E. Gamillscheg, *Mauricii strategicon* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 17), Vienna 1981, VII A 4; Leo VI Tactica, XIII 4, ed. Dennis, p. 278.

73 Giorgio di Pisidia, *De expeditione persica*, ed. Pertusi, 2, pp. 164-69.

74 Sebeos, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, trans., annot. R.W. Thomson, hist. comment. James Howard-Johnscon (Translared Texts for Historians, 31), Liverpool 1999, p. 81, speaks of 120,000 men, but this number should be dismissed as logistically unreliable.

75 Cf. Stouraitis, "Just War", pp. 238-39, Lilie, "Reality and Invention", p. 208.

76 Stoyanov, *Defenders*, pp. 45-75.

consideration. The generic ideological-political goal of the war was set by the idea of just defence for the perpetuation of the imperial power's autonomic rule over Roman territory, as is also testified by Pisides' text.[77] Even though Heraclius' counter-offensive against the Persians began in 622, the aforementioned exhortations were employed only after two years of campaigning. This demonstrates that the emperor made use of these ideas ad hoc and that these had no programmatic character with regard to the decision of waging war against an infidel enemy. Moreover, the eastern Roman military apparatus was, by medieval standards, a fairly professionalized, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic force of both indigenous and foreign full-time recruits whose loyalty to the emperor and their readiness to fight on his behalf were primarily dependent upon regular payment and systematic training.[78] The emperor's initiative to highlight the idea that death for a noble cause was not without recompense from God, which may reflect an Armenian influence,[79] does not a priori testify to an established conception of warfare as a sacral act and a sanctifying means within Byzantine society and in particular among his soldiers.

The attitudes of the eastern Christian masses, whence the emperor's recruits mainly came, towards warfare were primarily shaped by the Church whose religious doctrine did not define war as a means of indulgence or, for that matter, martyrdom. In this regard, the argument that Heraclius announced a new doctrine of "holy war" in agreement with the Church is problematical.[80] If this was so, why was the idea of an afterlife for fallen soldiers not also employed by Patriarch Sergios who was leading the defence of Constantinople during the Avar siege in 626 in order to underpin the morale of the city defenders? Moreover, if a new doctrine was agreed with the Church how can we explain that in the ecumenical council of 691, i.e. some decades after Heraclius' wars, the views of Athanasius and Basil the Great toward warfare became official canons of the Church? The content of both these views makes it clear that for the eastern Church participation in warfare for the defence of the Empire was considered as a socially praiseworthy and religiously forgiven deed, but maintained the image of an unavoidable and undesirable act for a Christian, which could by no means acquire the status of a means for the salvation of the soul or for acquiring a martyr-status.[81]

77 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 307.

78 On Heraclius' army, see Kaegi, *Heraclius*, pp. 110-13.

79 On a possible Armenian background to Heraclius' idea of spiritual recompense, see Stoyanov, *Defenders*, pp. 71-72.

80 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 447.

81 Stouraitis, *Krieg und Frieden*, pp. 353-57.

Within this framework, there is reason enough to argue that for those of Heraclius' soldiers whose mentality was indeed religious a reception of the emperor's message as a sacralisation of the act of war per se is doubtful, even if this had been the emperor's actual intention. Moreover, Heraclius' initiative on the battlefield in the midst of a dangerous conflict may have neither been intended to establish – and certainly was not broadly perceived in the aftermath as having consolidated – a distinct concept of war against the infidel as a means of indulgence. The fact that the Constantinopolitan Church did not react against the emperor's allusion to an afterlife for fallen soldiers, when his statement was made public by his official panegyrist back in Constantinople, could be taken as an indication that in Byzantine mentality such a statement was not a priori perceived as a sacralisation of the action of war per se. From the view-point of eastern Christian mentality, the emperor's notion that there was an afterlife for fallen Roman soldiers may have been understood as nothing more than a reflection of an established stance, according to which pious Christian-Roman soldiers should not fear that killing in a just war of defence would make them sinners, thus depriving them of the desired place in Heaven, should they die on the battlefield.

In light of this, despite the emperor's intention to sacralise warfare in the midst of his campaign, one may rightfully argue that Heraclius' Persian war did not bring about a major change in the norms of the Christian-Roman *ius ad bellum*. This was a war fought for the defence/restoration of the boundaries of Empire, not for the extermination of the infidel, as indicated by the emperor's actions not to pursue the final triumph of the Christian-Romans over the Zoroastrian-Persians by subjugating the infidel Persian Empire and liberating fellow-Christian populations there.[82]

4 Byzantine Just War Vis-á-vis Jihad

The triumph of Heraclius over the Persians proved to be extremely ephemeral, for shortly afterwards a new enemy appeared in the East that would soon come to rule over a large part of the Mediterranean coastline. The emergence of Islam and the territorial expansion of the Muslim community led to the substitution of the Persian Empire by the Caliphate as Byzantium's main rival. The Empire suffered the loss of its eastern provinces (Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia,

82 This is further demonstrated by the reports on Heraclius' efforts during the war to conclude a peace agreement with Khusrau II that would end the conflict, see Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, pp. 306, 324.

Armenia) and Egypt and it was eventually confronted with a new ideology of war that corresponded with a type of generic "holy war". The Muslim concept of jihad justified the resorting to military violence as a means for the expansion of the *umma* (the community of the believers) and the final triumph of Islamic monotheism and law over other peoples and religious doctrines. This contributed to the gradual configuration of a war doctrine that separated the world in two spheres, the area of Islamic law (dar al-Islam) and the area of war (dar al-Harb), where Islamic law had to be expanded programmatically through military means as long as its peoples were not willing to submit.[83]

Contrary to his Persian campaigns, Heraclius' defence against the Muslims found no epical and religiously-charged representation in the sources. This is probably due to its unsuccessful outcome that did not quite align with the needs of the Roman imperial grand-narrative of perpetual imperial rule over the *Oecumene*. Byzantine reactions to the Muslim war ethic are first documented in Constantinopolitan writings from the early-9th century onwards. This is an indication that the Muslim war doctrine took some time to be elaborated as such and to become known there.[84] Theophanes the Confessor is the first Constantinopolitan historiographer that reproduces material from eastern sources referring to jihad. In the author's negative view, Islam was a heresy[85] and Mohammed was deluded because he "taught his followers that those who kill an enemy or are killed by the enemy go to Heaven… and other similar outrageous and foolish things".[86]

This statement reflects Byzantine mainstream criticism of the Muslim conception of war as a means of absolution. In the letters exchanged between Niketas Byzantios and a Muslim counterpart in the reign of Michael III (842-867), the former criticized the notion of divinely-ordained murder and adopted an anthropocentric view by emphasizing that God could neither wish nor order the killing of its most precious creation, man.[87] This statement seems to emerge from the same ideological matrix that produced Theophanes' aforementioned criticism. In this respect, it is worth considering that Theophanes reported in his chronicle on Heraclius' utterances about an afterlife for fallen

83 On jihad, see; Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History*, pp. 119f.; Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, pp. 82-88; Idem, "Umayyad Efforts at Legitimation", pp. 189-91; Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, pp. 32-48; Heck, "Jihad Revisited", pp. 95-128; Firestone, *Jihad*, pp. 43f.; Robinson, "The Rise of Islam, 600-705", pp. 190-95.

84 Cf. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, pp. 82-88.

85 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 334.

86 Ibid., p. 334, 20-26.

87 Niketas Byzantios, ed. K. Förstel, *Niketas von Byzanz, Schriften zum Islam I* (Corpus Islamo-Christianum), Würzburg-Altenberge 2000, pp. 334-45.

Roman soldiers. If the author's criticism of what he represents as Muhammad's views on religious warfare seems to contradict ideologically his uncritical reproduction of Heraclius' apparently similar views, one way to explain this contradiction is to consider that the Byzantine notion of divine recompense for fallen Christian soldiers was not related to a generic image of war against the infidel as a divinely-ordained means of salvation.

Even though diverging approaches to the religious aspect of war can be traced in this period[88] the positions of Theophanes the Confessor and Niketas Byzantios reflect a preponderant strand of thought within the eastern Roman ruling elite of the 9th and early-10th centuries, as this is documented by two military treatises written at this time. The first is the compendium of Syrianos *magistros* which consisted of three treatises (on strategy, on military rhetoric, and on naval warfare) and is currently dated to the mid-9th century.[89] The section about military rhetoric supports this dating of the text, since the author highlights the fact that the barbarians fight the Romans because of their faith and suggests that Roman soldiers should be equally encouraged to fight also on behalf of the protection of their own faith, among other things.[90] This statement spotlights the Muslims, since by that time their image as an enemy whose war ethic was founded on the principle of expanding the own religion had taken its full shape.[91] Furthermore, it demonstrates the central role of religious identity in the ongoing process of ideological refinement of the concept of Christian-Roman just war since the early 7th century.

According to the author of the treatise, Christian-Roman soldiers "as participants in the teachings of God should sacrifice their lives for each other as well as for their fellow believers in order to become pupils of Christ through their deeds. Even if they ought not to understand God's law in that manner, for Christ had prevented Peter from drawing the sword, they needed to appeal to force on account of political interest and the pressure of circumstances".[92] This statement points to the traditional hierarchy between Roman statecraft and Christian religion in Byzantine political thought. The intertwining of the Roman notion of political interest with the Christian notion of *oikonomia* (norm-lenience) apportioned to religion a central role in the ethnical legitimization of military action while maintaining the justification of the decision to

88 Stoyanov, "Norms of War", p. 171.

89 Cosentino, "The Syrianos' Strategikon", pp. 243-80; Rance, "The date of the military compendium of Syrianus Magister", pp. 702-11 and 719-37.

90 Rhetorica militaris, ed. Erani, pp. 10, 1.

91 Haldon, *The Taktika of Leo VI*, pp. 18-20.

92 Ibid. 36, 8 pp.-9.

make war free of religious militarism. The emphasis on religious identity was not employed to propagate religious differences as grounds for war, but to justify the act of killing in warfare for the defence of Roman territory,[93] which in the Christian-Roman view principally contradicted God's will and law. Warfare was not perceived as a religious task by the author of the treatise but as "a great evil and more than an evil".[94]

The Byzantine ruling elite's effort to highlight a rationalized approach to the role of religion in the justification of warfare – rather as a reaction to the Islamic war ethic[95] – is made particularly evident in the most theorizing text regarding Byzantine just war, the military treatise Tactica of emperor Leo VI. This treatise was composed during the first decade of the 10th century, probably after 904 and was intended as a comprehensive treatment of warfare against all enemies of the Empire.[96] Within this framework, the author provides the first systematic Byzantine approach to the notion of *dikaios polemos* (just war), which encompassed the ideological developments that had taken place since the time of Heraclius.

In the prologue of the book, warfare is defined as an evil deed and a cunning of the devil, which as such contradicted divine will. A clear line is drawn between peaceful and warmongering peoples. The former are presented as obliged to employ military means to defend themselves against the attacks of the latter.[97] In the second chapter, the author provides a comprehensive definition of *dikaios polemos* (just war) as a necessary political means of protection when an enemy does not remain in his own boundaries but unjustly invades imperial territory. In this case, Roman generals had indeed a just cause to fight against him and could count on the aid of God on the battlefield.[98]

If the *Rhetorica militaris* highlighted religion as a central Roman value that needed to be defended in war for the protection of Roman political interests (identified with Roman territorial sovereignty), Leo VI's concept of just war represents an elaboration of this scheme. The interrelation of the notion of justice with the defence of the boundaries of the Roman imperial polity and its Christian subjects points to the deviation of the Byzantine war ethic from the Augustinian conception of justice. This deviation is made emphatically

93 Ibid. 37, p. 8.

94 *De re strategica*, in G.T. Dennis, *Three Byzantine Military Treatises* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 25), Washington, D.C. 1985, pp. 4, 10.

95 Cf. Stouraitis, "Just War", pp. 242-43.

96 On the dating of the treatise, see the exhaustive commentary in Haldon, *The Taktika of Leo VI*, pp. 55-68.

97 Leo VI Tactica, prol. IV, ed. Dennis, pp. 4-5.

98 Ibid., II 29-31, ed. Dennis, pp. 34-36.

evident by Leo VI's statements on the role of God and religion in the justification of warfare against all enemies, Christian and infidel. In summary, the author emphasizes that more than other actions, the beginnings of the war must be just and that the one defending himself against others who are acting unjustly is truly just himself. God's support on the battlefield is preserved only for those who do not act unjustly by launching attacks or pillaging raids against other peoples, since those that begin an unjust war will have victory taken away by divine justice itself.[99]

These statements demonstrate a fairly rationalized – by medieval standards – approach to the role of the divine in the justification of warfare. Departing from a theocentric mentality, the author acknowledged God as the ultimate source of justice and allotted to the divinity a central role in influencing the outcome of war as an aid to the righteous on the battlefield. However, he evidently sought to disconnect fully the notion of just cause from the Old Testament notion of divine will and command. Instead, he depicted the divinity's aid on the battlefield as the ultimate sign of legitimate military activity, explicitly dependent on a notion of justice that was determined in purely secular terms, i.e. in terms of the imperial polity's territorial integrity.[100]

The role of religion in the Byzantine *ius ad bellum* is further clarified, if we consider the author's discourse about a generic categorization of peoples in peaceful and warlike. This normative discourse was intended to promote an image of the Oecumene as divided between a Christian part, where the Christian peoples should live in peace with each other due to the norms of their religion, and a non-Christian part that was inhabited by warmongering infidels who due to their generic impiety threatened the former's peace.[101] In this context, the Muslims, as the Empire's infidel archenemies, are presented to believe that "God rejoices in warfare, even though He disperses the warmongering nations".[102] On the contrary, the Christian Bulgars are presented as having erroneously taken up arms against the Christian Empire, whereas the emperor points to the unwillingness of the Byzantines to fight against them as fellow-believers. Their defeat by the Magyars is interpreted as a just punishment inflicted on them by God due to the fact that they had attacked the territories of fellow-Christians.[103]

99 Ibid., XX 58, XX 169, epil. 14-17, ed. Dennis, pp. 556, 594, 624.

100 Stouraitis, "Jihād and Crusade", pp. 19-22; Idem, "Just War", pp. 239-40.

101 Stouraitis, *Krieg und Frieden*, pp. 237-52.

102 Leo VI Tactica, XVIII 105, ed. Dennis, p. 476.

103 Ibid., XVIII 40, ed. Dennis, p. 452.

The latter statement demonstrates that in the war ethic of the Byzantine power elite the notion of the enemy's impiety was not determined exclusively by religious difference (i.e. difference of faith, doctrinal disputes etc.). It was rather understood in broader terms and related to a generic image of warfare as an impious act that contradicted divine will. Thus, in Byzantine discourse impiety could normatively be ascribed to the side of the aggressor that waged war against the divinely-ordained pacifying Roman imperial power, irrespective of the enemy's religious belief. Any enemy attacking the Empire, Christian or not, or orthodox or not, could be categorized as a warmonger, i.e. unjust, and therefore as doomed to face God's wrath on the battlefield.[104]

The application of this concept of war justification against enemies of the same faith is made evident in reports on the war against the Christian Bulgars a few years after the composition of the Tactica, the cause of which was provided by tsar Symeon's invasion of imperial territory. The historiographical sources testify to an intensive employment of religious symbols and rhetoric on the battlefield as a standardized practice of the Byzantine army.[105] In their diplomatic correspondence with tsar Symeon, members of the Byzantine ruling elite such as Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos and the court official Theodoros Daphnopates claimed that the Byzantine army would fight with the alliance of God on the battlefield, should the Bulgars not stop their attacks against the Empire.[106] In a reported speech of emperor Romanos I Lakapenos in his meeting with the Bulgar tsar in front of the walls of Constantinople, the emperor blamed Symeon that his deeds contradicted his Christian identity, since he unjustly attacked the Empire and shed the blood of other Christians. For this, he would have to answer to God.[107]

This discourse of justification of warfare against enemies of the same faith in the early 10th century provides the socio-ideological framework within which the evidence of the Tactica about the religiously-charged exhortations to Byzantine soldiers before battle needs to be interpreted. The central ideas

104 Stouraitis, *Krieg und Frieden*, pp. 308-310; idem, "Methodologische Überlegungen", pp. 279-82.

105 *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker, pp. 388, 13-17, 388, 23-389, 4; cf. Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, pp. 202-203, 86; *George Monachos Continuatus*, ed. I. Bekker, *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus*, Bonn 1838, 880, 18-881, 9. On religious practices in the Byzantine army see, Dennis, "Religious Services", pp. 107-117; cf. Karapli, *Κατευόδωσις στρατοῦ*, pp. 45-138.

106 Nicholas Mystikos, *Letters*, eds. R.J.H. Jenkins/L.G. Westerink, *Nicolaus I Mysticus Epistulae* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 6), Washington, D.C. 1973, pp. 331, 89-92; Theodore Dapnopates, *Letters*, ed. Darrouzès/Westerink, pp. 5, 159-63.

107 *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker, pp. 408-09.

highlighted by the heralds were: the soldiers should expect a reward from God due to their faith as well as a reward from the emperor. Fighting took place on behalf of God and the brothers of the same faith. God as the ultimate judge of the outcome of wars was on the side of the Christian-Romans against those that were unfaithful to Him.[108] Considering that the author does not relate God's reward with killing or being killed in battle, and that there is no mention of a martyr-status for fallen soldiers, these statements reflect a standardized mode of exhortation and morale-building on the battlefield, which could be employed against any warmongering enemy of the Christian-Romans, infidel or Christian, who defied God's peace and attacked the Empire.[109] In Byzantine perception, Christian enemies that took the offensive against the Romans were as barbarian, impious and unfaithful to God as any infidel enemy of the Empire that did the same, and were confronted as such on the battlefield.

In light of this, the war ethic of the Tactica pinpoints two main aspects of the development of medieval Eastern Roman war mentality and ethic. First, reference to the divine was the main means to morally legitimize the act of fighting within the framework of a theocentric mentality that explained all human action through the plan of divine providence, thus perceiving and propagating God's aid on the battlefield as a signifier of justice in warfare. Second, the shared religious culture of imperial soldiers was the main means to promote collective identification by inspiring recruits of different regional and ethno-cultural backgrounds with an image of community and a sense of solidarity.[110]

5 Byzantine Reconquista and the Crusades

The offensive military policies of the Byzantine ruling elite between the late 10th and early 11th centuries, and on a lesser scale during the 12th century, demonstrate that religion could play an equally important role in legitimizing expansionary warfare even in the absence of a doctrine of generic "holy war". The justification of Byzantine wars of expansion was grounded on a distortion of the notion of territorial defence, which legitimized offensive activity instead of averting it. This distortion was facilitated by the content of the Byzantine ruling elite's Roman identity. The latter was principally an identity of political culture that promoted a world view in which the emperor of Constantinople

108 Leo VI Tactica, XII 57, ed. Dennis, pp. 248-50.

109 Stouraitis, "Just War", pp. 262-63.

110 Ibid., pp. 247-48.

was the only remaining Roman emperor and, therefore, the only sovereign with a rightful claim to lost territories of the old *orbis romanus*. As a result, in Byzantine political thought the notion of defence of Roman territorial integrity was not reduced to the contracted, fluctuating territorial boundaries of imperial authority. Instead, it could be identified any time with the reconquest of territories beyond the actual limits of Constantinople's current territorial realm. Offensive war for the restoration of imperial rule over those territories and their ethno-culturally diverse populations that had been for centuries under foreign rule could thus enjoy God's approval and aid.[111]

This discourse of just war provided the Byzantine emperors with unlimited potential to justify offensive warfare in their immediate geopolitical sphere and was applied to justify wars of expansion against Christian and non-Christian enemies alike. For instance, small-scale expansionary activity against the Muslims in the reign of Leo VI, the theoretician of the Byzantine conception of just war of defence, was justified through the axiom that the Roman emperor did not claim back what was not his, but that which had formerly been under the Roman iron rod.[112] Similarly, during the Bulgar war in the first half of the 10th century the Byzantine ruling elite claimed the territories under Bulgar rule, because these were former Roman possessions.[113] This claim underpinned the justification of expansionary Byzantine military activity against the Christian Bulgars under John I Tzimiskes (969-976) and Basil II (976-1025) that led to the subjugation of the Bulgar kingdom twice within a period of roughly 50 years.

The only documented deviation from this preponderant ideological model is attested in the period of emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963-69), who seems to represent an alternative strand of thought within Byzantine society in this period.[114] In the words of John Skylitzes, Phokas appealed to the Church and requested that all fallen soldiers should be declared martyrs, thus seeking to relate explicitly the salvation of the soul with military activity.[115] This appeal met, however, with the resistance of the higher clergy that declined the emperor's proposal.[116]

111 Stouraitis, *Krieg und Frieden*, pp. 201-8; idem, "Just War", pp. 253-56.

112 Arethas, *Scripta Minora*, II 62, 33, 14-16, ed. L.G. Westerink, *Arethae archiepiscopi Caesariensis scripta minora*, vol. 1-2, Leipzig 1968/1972.

113 Theodore Dapnopates, *Letters*, ed. Darrouzès/Westerink, pp. 5, 121-24.

114 Riedel, "Nikephoros II Phokas and Orthodox Military Martyrs", pp. 121-47.

115 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 274.

116 Cf. Zonaras' comments on St Basil's canon in Ralles/Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων*, pp. 131-132.

The fact that Phokas did not seek to make the notion of soldier-martyrdom dependent upon warfare against infidel enemies, but upon all warfare, defensive or offensive, against any enemy of the Empire corresponds with the dominant war mentality of the Byzantine social elite. This mentality defined all enemies of the Empire as unjust aggressors and therefore as impious.[117] Furthermore, Phokas' appeal represents an additional indication that up to his time the abstract notion of a reward from God which was included in exhortative messages to Byzantine soldiers on the battlefield was not related exclusively with war against the infidels, whereas it had little to do with a socially established belief that death in battle was a means of absolution and martyrdom.[118] Phokas' aim through his appeal was obviously to achieve the widespread diffusion of the latter belief through the Church, the main ideological mechanism capable of such a task. In this regard, it is likely that his notion of soldier-martyrdom reflected the mentality of a militarized part of the Byzantine military elite in the eastern provinces, whence he came, and that it bore an influence from Muslim approaches to the spirituality of warfare which the emperor sought to adapt to the Constantinopolitan religious-political context.[119]

This argument is further supported, if one considers the evidence of Phokas' notion of a war for the expansion and final triumph of the Christian religion over Islam. According to a letter to the caliph al-Muti, the content of which is delivered in an Arab poem, the emperor threatened to invade Muslim territories with his army and conquer them as far as Mekka in order to destroy Islam and impose the Christian religion.[120] Even though this literary source should be addressed with caution – even more so since Phokas never undertook a campaign of this kind – the content of the letter seems not to be incongruent with the emperor's war mentality and his generic perception of the Byzantine-Muslim conflict. Phokas' statements in this case manifest an inversion of the basic norms of the Christian-Roman *ius ad bellum*, insofar as they justified military activity for the sake of Christianity's expansion and ultimate domination over Islam, thus supplanting any notion of Roman statecraft and territorial integrity.

117 The idea that God aided and protected those who were unjustly attacked also pervaded popular attitudes towards warfare; cf. Trombley, "War, Society and Popular Religion in Byzantine Anatolia", pp. 118-33.

118 Cf. Stouraitis, "Just War", pp. 245-47.

119 Dagron, "Byzance et la modèle islamique", pp. 219-43; Dagron/Mihăescu, *Le Traité sur la Guerilla*, pp. 147-49, 284-87.

120 Grünebaum G., "Eine poetische Polemik", pp. 43-64.

Be that as it may, this alternative strand of thought regarding the role of religion in the justification of warfare, which Phokas' rise to the throne brought to the fore, did not have a lasting impact on the normative war ideology of the imperial office after this emperor's death. This becomes evident if one takes a look at the development of the Byzantine war ethic during the period of the Crusades. Even though emperor Alexios I Komnenos' (1081-1118) call for military support from the West admittedly played a significant role in the emergence of the First Crusade (1096),[121] the Byzantine reactions towards this new phenomenon are indicative of the differentiated development of the Christian-Roman war ethic in the Eastern and Western post-Roman world respectively. This difference is documented by the obvious difficulties that the Byzantine ruling elite had in identifying with, and actively supporting, the goals of the crusading movement.

The Byzantine authors' stance towards the first three major Crusades to the Holy Land (1096-9, 1147-9, 1187-92) is preponderantly negative, since they almost unanimously depict the Crusaders as fierce enemies that threatened the Empire's existence.[122] This is also true for Niketas Choniates who admittedly demonstrates the most favourable attitude towards the Crusader goals, acknowledging that the intention of the participants of the Second Crusade to fight for the protection of the Holy Land had been proven true in retrospect.[123] In this regard, the Byzantine elite's perceptions of the Crusading movement can be better characterized as ambivalent.[124] On the one hand, the idea of war against the infidels, who were generically categorized as warmongers and unjust aggressors in Byzantine thinking, was evaluated positively.[125] On the other hand, Byzantine political mentality could not cope with a conception of warfare whose cause was not principally configured and justified by the political notion of the Roman emperor's authority over lost parts of the Roman Oecumene.

This becomes evident in the Byzantine practice of demanding oaths of allegiance to the emperor from the leading participants of the First and Second Crusades.[126] These oaths were intended to secure Constantinople's authority over reconquered territories – a fact that points to a basic difference between

121 Shepard, "Cross-purposes", pp. 107-29; cf. Frankopan, *The First Crusade*, pp. 87-100.

122 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, X 5, 10; X 6, 7; X 9, 1, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, pp. 299, 301, 309; Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke, p. 67, 3-10; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, pp. 60, 45-48.

123 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, pp. 61, 56-65.

124 Cf. Stouraitis, "Jihād and Crusade", pp. 26-42.

125 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 416.

126 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, X 10, 5; X 11, 2; X 11, 5, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, pp. 316, 317, 319; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 61; cf. Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusader States*, pp. 6-24,

Byzantine and Crusader approaches to warfare against the infidel. While the Crusaders defined the justifying cause of warfare explicitly in religious terms, i.e. liberation of Christians and their lands from the yoke of non-Christians, the Roman mentality of the Byzantine elite could not subordinate the political interests of maintenance and restoration of Roman imperial rule to a higher religious cause that would supersede the political prerogatives of the Roman emperor. This is indicated by the reluctance of the imperial power to dedicate its forces to the cause of the First Crusade. Moreover, it is demonstrated by Byzantine policies against the Crusader states as well as by the generic Byzantine image of the Christian Latins as enemies of the Empire.[127]

In this light, the patterns of justification of the small-scale Komnenian reconquest that took place parallel to the Crusading movement did not deviate from the norms of a Roman "reconquista". Anna Komnene testifies to the rationale that legitimized Alexios I's military activity against the Seljuk-Turks when she reports on the emperor's demand that the Turks should withdraw from all Roman territory, which they had conquered after the battle of Mantzikert (1071).[128] The author's adherence to the traditional norms of the Roman war ethic is demonstrated by her statement that Alexios I would have restored the Roman rule over the whole former *orbis romanus*, should the conditions had been more favourable.[129] Niketas Choniates and John Kinnamos justified the reconquest of territories in Asia Minor by John II Komnenos based on the argument that these were former Roman possessions, even when the emperors' military activity was directed against indigenous Christian populations that were not willing to submit to his rule.[130] This latter aspect is also indicative of the discrepancy of views with regard to warfare between the ruling elite of Constantinople and former subject populations. The latter did not a priori identify with imperial ideals of liberation and reconquest such as the ones employed by the court poet Theodoros Prodromos to justify the offensive activity of John II. These poems highlighted Constantinople's Roman prerogative to restore its rule over cities and their populations through warfare fought with God's alliance on the battlefield.[131]

143-44; Pryor, "The oaths of the leaders of the First Crusade", pp. 111f.; Shepard, "When Greek meets Greek", pp. 227-41.

127 Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusader States*, pp. 61-221.

128 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, XV 6, 5, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 478.

129 Ibid. VI 11, 3; cf. Laiou, "On Just War in Byzantium", pp. 156-61, pp. 168-69; Stouraitis, "Conceptions of War and Peace", pp. 69-80.

130 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, pp. 37-38; Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke, p. 22.

131 Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos*, pp. 92-108.

This normative Roman approach to the justification of war against the Turks is better documented in a sermon written by Euthymios Malakes in early 1176 on the occasion of the celebrations for the rebuilding of the fortresses Dorylaion and Soublaion in Asia Minor by Manuel I (1143-1180). The court panegyrist claimed that the emperor had said to his soldiers that "they defended piety and fought on behalf of God. They did not conquer barbarian cities nor pursued what was not theirs. They did no injustice, but fought for what was their own".[132] The just cause of this war was once again defined by the notion of retaking territory that had once been under Roman imperial rule. It was not religious difference, but the invasion and occupation of imperial territory that justified warfare against the Turks. Once again religious discourse was not employed to determine the decision to go to war, but to underpin the justice of those political reasons that imposed certain constraints upon the waging of Byzantine warfare.

Even though Manuel I seems to have tried to imitate Crusading motifs by wishing for himself the title of martyr and athlete of Christ should he die on the battlefield, according to the same panegyrist,[133] both the goals and the justification of his war policies were clearly informed by the traditional norms of the Byzantine *ius ad bellum*, like those of his predecessors.[134] Moreover, there is no indication that popular attitudes – as these were primarily configured through the ideological messages of the Church – regarding the relationship between warfare and martyrdom underwent any significant change during the 12th century. This becomes evident in the comments on St Basil's canon by the 12th-century canonists John Zonaras, Theodore Balsamon and Alexios Aristenos, in which they make reference to Nikephoros II Phokas' appeal to the Church. The first two canonists considered St Basil's suggestion for penitential chastisements to the soldiers as burdensome and impractical due to the soldiers' obligation constantly to defend the Empire's borders and its populations against enemy attacks.[135] Nevertheless, none of the three declined the canon's ideological validity as an argument for rejecting Phokas' notion of death in battle as an act leading to absolution and martyrdom.[136]

The sack of Constantinople by the armies of the Fourth Crusade in April 1204 signalled the political disintegration of the East Roman Empire, from which it never managed to fully recover. The norms of the Christian-Roman *ius*

132 *Ευθυμίου του Μαλάκη, Τα Σωζόμενα*, pp. 31, 5-9.

133 Ibid., pp. 23, 9-13.

134 Chrysos, "1176 – a Byzantine Crusade?", pp. 81-6; Stouraitis, "Jihād and Crusade", pp. 42-47.

135 Ralles/Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων*, pp. 131-32.

136 Stouraitis, "Jihād and Crusade", pp. 54-58.

ad bellum continued to influence the war ethic and mentality of the divided Byzantine elite, even though they were adapted to the new socio-political parameters and the political needs of the smaller entities that came out of the Empire's disintegration.[137]

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137 Kyriakidis, *Warfare in Late Byzantium*, pp. 13-44.

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CHAPTER 3

Civil War in the Christian Empire

Yannis Stouraitis

The diachronic phenomenon of internal armed conflict is evident in many different forms of social organization (e.g. tribal units, ethnic groups, religious communities, city-states, kingdoms and empires). Civil war as an analytical category of research refers to internal armed conflict within the political frame of the state that involves the regime as a main actor and roughly equally intense fighting from both the government and the rebels.[1] In the current paper, the focus will be on civil war in the Byzantine Empire between the 4th and the 12th centuries, that is, on armed conflicts that emerged within the fluctuating boundaries of the imperial office's enforceable authority (political, economic and military)[2] as a result of rebellions of usurpation of, or secession from, imperial rule.[3]

Modern civil wars are usually classified according to the number of casualties: a) minor armed conflicts with fewer than 1000 battle-related deaths over the course of the entire conflict; b) intermediate armed conflicts with a total of at least 1000 battle-related deaths during the course of the conflict; and c) war with at least 1000 battle-deaths annually.[4] This heuristic framework poses obvious problems to the historian of the Middle Ages, since the analytical criterion regarding the number of casualties is hardly applicable. Not only has the lethality of warfare increased geometrically in modern times due to the technological advancement of weapons,[5] so that any comparison is untenable, but also Byzantine sources only rarely provide information on battle-related deaths, the accuracy of which is dubious.

For Byzantium, Warren Treadgold has suggested the following analytical definition of civil war: "An armed conflict in which a significant number of

1 Angstrom, "Towards a Typology", 95-6; Walter B.F., "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement", p. 343.

2 For a definition of the state, see Haldon, *The State*, pp. 32-34; cf. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 56-62, esp. p. 57.

3 My approach to Byzantine civil war in the current paper represents an effort to revisit the arguments I presented in the first part of my paper "Byzantine war against Christians", pp. 86-92.

4 Wallensteen/Sollenberg, "Armed Conflict", pp. 635-49.

5 Malešević, *The Sociology of Warfare*, pp. 98-117.

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Byzantine soldiers fought on both sides with a significant number of casualties".[6] This definition bears certain problems. First, even if we had the ability to measure casualties in Byzantine civil wars, which we do not have in the majority of cases, the vague formulation about *a significant number of casualties* is problematic, since it actually excludes certain rebellions that Treadgold has included in his list of Byzantine civil wars. For instance, the sources provide no evidence of a major battle, i.e. no indication of a *significant number of casualties*, in the internal armed conflict between Nikephoros Phokas and Joseph Bringas in 963, since the rebel's military superiority facilitated the occupation of the capital without extensive fighting. The army of the rebel Alexios Komnenos marched to Constantinople and occupied it by treachery. The rebels plundered the city but no serious fighting is reported and casualties were definitely extremely low even by medieval standards.[7]

If the level of violence cannot provide a solid distinguishing criterion, this certainly does not mean that a working definition of Byzantine civil war can be as broad as to include any policing action of the army within the emperor's realm. Not least because within the borders of imperial authority no clear distinction between police and army forces existed. Nonetheless, the presence of Byzantine soldiers on both fighting sides, even though it seems to apply to the majority of large-scale internal armed conflicts in the Empire, is also a problematical criterion. For example, the armed conflict between Bardas Phokas and the emperor John I Tzimiskes in 970 has been included in the list of Byzantine civil wars.[8] However, at the time of the rebellion Phokas was deprived of any military office and was kept under custody, from which he escaped. In the absence of control over regular field units, he had to rely on a force of retinues who he gathered in his family's homeland of Cappadocia.[9] Whether these had served as soldiers or were soldiers of the regular imperial army at the time remains unclear. This hardly alters the fact, though, that Phokas engaged in an armed conflict with the regime of John I Tzimiskes in order to claim the rule of the imperial state.

From a heuristic point of view, regular soldiers need not be present on both sides for a civil war to take place, since the term "armed forces" may very well include bandits, mercenaries or other irregular armed groups.[10] The *Nika* revolt in the reign of Justinian I represents a good example in the Byzantine

6 Treadgold, "Byzantium, the reluctant warrior", p. 224.

7 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, II 10, 1-4, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, pp. 79-81.

8 Treadgold, "Byzantium, the reluctant warrior", p. 231.

9 Beck, *Byzantinisches Gefolgschaftswesen*, p. 25.

10 Angstrom, "Towards a Typology", p. 105.

case. This was a short-term, but intense, armed conflict within the imperial-city state of Constantinople, the governing centre of the empire, with a documented large number of casualties.[11] The riot of the circus factions escalated into a bloody clash between the soldiers of the imperial regime and armed parts of the city populace. Byzantine authors describe this event not as a simple riot but as an *emphylios polemos* (internal war[12]) aimed at deposing the ruler of the imperial city-state.[13] As a result, the *Nika* revolt, even though it is not included in the aforementioned list of civil wars, since soldiers were not present on both sides and did not cause a longer war within the empire, fulfils all basic heuristic criteria of a small-scale internal armed conflict, the argument of which was state power.

In light of this, the decisive criterion to distinguish a civil war from a rebellion, a mutiny or a policing action of the imperial state's armed forces can neither be the number of casualties nor the participation of army units on both sides. It primarily depends on the goal of those causing an armed conflict with the regime. Based on this, a working definition of civil war in the Byzantine Empire could be as follows: An armed conflict involving the military forces of the imperial regime and one or more organized groups of subjects that used armed force in order to contest the rule of the empire in the person of the emperor or to contest the unity of the imperial realm itself.

Based on this definition, civil wars in the politically united realm of Constantinople up to 1204 could be roughly distinguished between small-scale and large-scale according to the duration of the conflict that usually corresponds with a higher degree of intensity and larger numbers of participating forces and casualties. Conflicts that lasted from a few weeks up to a few months can be classified as small-scale, whereas conflicts that lasted longer than one year and affected larger areas of imperial territory can be classified as large-scale, i.e. war.

This analytical framework can be used as a point of departure to approach the terminology of internal warfare in the Byzantine sources. The Latin/Roman term for internal war was *bellum civile*, whereas the Greek equivalent was

11 See the detailed description of the conflict in *Chronicon paschale*, ed. L. Dindorf, vol. 1 (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae), Bonn 1832, pp. 620, 3-629, 7.

12 Byzantine authors employ the term *polemos*, which means war, to refer indiscriminately to all kinds of armed conflict irrespective of the scale of duration and casualties. In this regard, there is no overlap between the modern analytical understanding of war, as a large-scale armed conflict, and the Byzantine use of the term.

13 According to Angstrom, "Towards a Typology", pp. 106-7; in a civil war the fighting needs not affect the whole territory of the state, but may affect only a small part of it and take place in one region.

emphylios polemos. The conceptual overlap between the Latin/Roman term and the modern conception of civil war is obvious, since the adjective *civilis* etymologically relates the notion of internal warfare to the notions of citizenship and political community (city-state). On the contrary, the Greek term *phylon* means race or category[14] and does not presuppose political organization. Byzantine authors equally employed the term *emphylios polemos* to denote warfare within the political boundaries of the imperial community, but also within other types of communities, which were not characterized by centralized political organization. For instance, Byzantine sources termed the wars between the city-states of Ancient Greece as internal warfare (*emphylios polemos*) due to the common ethnic identity of the participants and despite the lack of a centralized state, i.e. of political unity.[15] In the same manner, the term *emphylios polemos* was applied to define warfare within the broader ethno-cultural collectivity of the Goths, which was not circumscribed by centralized rule and was internally sub-divided into various sub-*ethnies*.[16]

In the period under scrutiny, the boundaries of the Roman community were primarily described in political terms and were not represented as being identical with the boundaries of an ethno-cultural community. The fluctuating limits of the polity of Roman subjects were delineated by the imperial office's enforceable authority – fiscal, juridical and military – over a certain territory and its populations.[17] The role of the image of an imperial polity in determining the main traits of the phenomenon of East Roman internal armed conflict is reflected in the terminology of the Byzantine sources. Rebellions that escalated into armed conflicts were described by the terms *apostasia* (apostasy/defection), *tyrannis* (usurpation), *neoterismos* (change by force), *epanastasis* (rebellion) and *stasis* (insurrection). This terminological variety has as a common point of reference the contesting of imperial rule, i.e. state rule.

14 Liddell H.G./ Scott R., A Greek-English Lexicon. Oxford 1996, p. 1962.

15 Cf. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Historical Excerpts*, eds. T. Büttner-Wobst/A.G. Roos, *Excerpta historica iussu imp. Constantini Porphyrogeniti confecta, vol. 2: excerpta de virtutibus et vitiis*, pt. 1, Berlin 1906, p. 213, 1.

16 Socrates, *Church History*, ed. Maraval P./Péricichon P., *Socrate de Constantinople, Histoire ecclésiastique* (Livres I-VII), Paris 2004-2007, pp. 3, 33, 1; cf. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Historical Excerpts,* ed. C. de Boor, *Excerpta historica iussu imp. Constantini Porphyrogeniti confecta, vol. 1: excerpta de legationibus*, pts. 1-2, Berlin 1903, pp. 387, 2-11.

17 Stouraitis, "Roman identity", pp. 175-206, with an overview of other approaches and bibliography. On imperial Roman-ness as a dominant political discourse, cf. Pohl, "Introduction: Strategies of Distinction", p. 1.

This latter aspect is highlighted in the statements of Byzantine authors on internal warfare. Constantine VII, writing in the mid-10th century, appealed to God to "defend Constantinople from all enemies and misfortunes that approach it, from internal war (*emphylios polemos*) and from the inroads of foreign people (*ethne*)".[18] Here, internal war is juxtaposed with war against foreign invaders and refers to contestation of the imperial power from those under Roman rule. In a similar manner, Michael Psellos stated in his *Chronographia* with regard to the reign of Constantine IX (1042-1055) that "first internal wars (*emphylioi polemoi*) upset the imperial realm (*archê*), afterwards inroads of foreign peoples despoiled most of our lands".[19]

The semantic variation of the term *emphylios polemos* in Byzantine texts, which could be equally employed to describe an internal armed conflict within a community of common culture without centralized political organization as well as within a political community circumscribed by centralized imperial authority, was facilitated by the semantic broadness of the term *phylon* which went beyond the narrow notion of race and could be applied to categorize a group according to other common characteristics that excluded common kinship. For instance, Theophanes Continuatus designated the rebellion of usurpation of the Roman officer Thomas the so-called Slav as an *emphylios polemos* while highlighting his Slavic origin.[20] What made this conflict an internal war from the point of view of Constantinople was not a notion of common cultural identity but the rebel's status as a Roman subject that used indigenous and foreign armed forces in order to claim the Roman imperial power for himself.

At this point, it is important to note that the Roman vision of political community was gradually complemented from the 4th century on by the vision of a religious community.[21] Christian identity incrementally configured a notion of common cultural identity within the framework of gradual Christianization of the empire's populations, which had an impact upon Byzantine notions of civil war. This impact becomes salient in the post-7th century Byzantine sources when the process of Christianization had been completed. Patriarch Nikephoros reported on the civil war between Constantine V and Artabasdos

18 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, ed. J.F. Haldon (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 28), Wien 1990, pp. 114, 324-27.

19 Psellos, *Chronographia*, I 6, ed. Impellizzeri, p. 72.

20 Theophanes Continuatus, ed. M. Featherstone/J.S. Codoñer, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur libri I–IV* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, LIII), Bertlin 2015, p. 76.

21 Inglebert, "Citoyenneté romaine", pp. 244-46.

in the late 8th century: "Under those circumstances the affairs of the Romans were in extreme distress, inasmuch as the struggle for power among those men aroused an internal armed conflict between Christians".[22] Theophanes the Confessor stated in his *chronographia*, in a rather anachronistic fashion, that after the end of the internal armed conflicts between Constantine I and his contenders over the throne "the affairs of the Christian *politeia* (state) enjoyed the perfect peace, with the tyrants put out of the way through the might of the life-giving Cross, and with God's partner Constantine alone controlling the Roman Empire".[23]

The Christian religion had provided Roman geopolitical discourse with a common cultural basis that pervaded all social strata. The notion that all Roman subjects were brothers in Christ downplayed regional and ethno-cultural diversities, thus facilitating the use of the language of metaphoric kinship in the Byzantine authors' accounts of civil wars. However, if all Romans should ideally be Chalcedonian Christians according to Roman law, only those Christians within the boundaries of imperial authority were classified as Romans next to the heretics or non-Christian subjects of the emperor. Moreover, terms, such as *phylon*, *genos* or *ethnos Christianon* could be employed to refer to a much larger community than the community of the Roman subjects, i.e. they did not a priori identify with the latter. For instance, in a letter to the Pope in the early 10th century Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos argued about the fourth marriage of Emperor Leo VI that "the Romans introduced four marriages into the holy nation (*ethnos*) of the Christians on the excuse of pleasing the emperor".[24]

The notion of a broader Christian community that encompassed the Roman political community along with other peoples promoted a more nuanced Byzantine approach to the notion of internal armed conflict after the 9th century, when the empire had to fight wars with the Christianized Bulgar kingdom at its northern borders. The fact that the non-heretical Bulgars belonged, like the Romans, to the broader community of the Christian people, the *genos Christianon* according to Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos,[25] favoured a vision of warfare between those two peoples as an internal armed conflict. Within this ideological framework, the Patriarch unravelled a full-blown discourse of metaphoric kinship in a series of letters to the Bulgar tsar Symeon, written in the period after 914, which aimed to convince the latter to stop his offensive against his Christian brothers.[26] A similar stance is documented in the text of Anna

22 Nikephoros, *Short History*, ed. Mango, p. 65.

23 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 20.

24 Nicholas Mystikos, *Letters*, ed. Jenkins/Westerink, pp. 32, 472-3.

25 Ibid., pp. 16, 21-4 and 18, 68-9.

26 Stouraitis, "Byzantine War against Christians", pp. 93-5.

Komnene, writing around the mid-12th century. The author reports on a conflict between the Byzantine army and the Serbs, and observes that the emperor wanted to avoid an internal armed conflict (*emphylia machê*), since the Serbs were Christians as well.[27] Furthermore, she presents Alexios I Komnenos as wanting to prevent a clash between the Byzantines and the forces of the First Crusade in front of the walls of Constantinople to avoid internal killing (*emphylios phonos*) among Christians.[28]

The concept of internal armed conflict among the members of a broader religious community that transcended the vision of a Roman political community needs to be soberly evaluated from the point of view of Byzantine foreign policy. The Byzantine power elite promoted a normative vision of a Christian Oecumene, where Christian peoples should live in peace with each other – a concept based on an ideal dichotomy that presented Christian identity as inherently peaceful and non-Christian identity as inherently warmongering.[29] The latter discourse was the product of political pragmatism that made use of religion to legitimize ethically all Byzantine warfare against the empire's non-Christian enemies. The religious heterodoxy of the enemy was a priori regarded as a sign of a warmongering nature that signified warfare in the name of the unifying peace-making rule of the Christian imperial power of Constantinople as an unavoidable and therefore justified deed.[30]

On the other hand, the image of war between Christian peoples as a war between brothers was intended to inhibit attacks from Christian adversaries or to legitimize ethically Byzantine military activity against them, insofar as Christian peoples that attacked the Christian Empire were automatically rendered as impious and unjust in Byzantine discourse. The image of impiety had here nothing to do with religious difference as a cause for war, but was rather the means to justify warfare against fellow-believers as just war (*dikaios polemos*), i.e. war that enjoyed the approval and the alliance of God.[31] It follows that the notion of internal armed conflict among Christian peoples was the outcome of an elaborate political discourse that sought to enrich the sophisticated diplomatic practices of the imperial city-state of Constantinople with ethical arguments in its effort to prevent military conflicts between the

27 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, IX 10, 1, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 279.

28 Ibid. X 9, 5, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 310.

29 Cf. Leo VI Tactica, ed. G.T. Dennis, *Leonis VI Taktika* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae XLIX), Washington, D.C. 2010, p. 4.

30 On an analysis of the Byzantine concept of just war and the inherently offensive disposition of Byzantine war ideology, see Stouraitis, "Just War", 250-64; idem, *Krieg und Frieden*, pp. 189-303.

31 Stouraitis, *Krieg und Frieden*, pp. 293-96.

Rhomaioi and other Christian peoples, when the momentum was not right, that is, when the equilibrium of military power was not favourable for the Constantinopolitan imperial power.[32] As a result, it was quite distinct from the East Roman approach to civil war as an internal affair of the imperial state.

The latter was determined by the political discourse of Empire, as the treatment of the Bulgar wars during the reign of Basil II (976-1025) in the Byzantine sources demonstrates. The historiographer John Skylitzes employed the term *apostasia* (apostasy/defection) to define the revolt of the Kometopouloi,[33] the four brothers of a potent Bulgar clan, which occurred almost simultaneously with Basil II's ascend to the imperial throne (976). The use of the term *apostasia* in this case – a term commonly employed by Byzantine authors to denote an armed rebellion against the Roman imperial office – had little to do with the common religious identity between the Byzantines and the Bulgars but was facilitated by the Roman vision of the centralized imperial state. The latter made the Bulgar movement an *apostasia*, i.e. an armed rebellion against centralized imperial rule, due to the Bulgar magnates' status – at the time probably only nominal – as Roman subjects after the subjugation of the Bulgar ruling elite to emperor John I Tzimiskes in 972.[34]

In their accounts of Basil II's early reign, however, Byzantine historiographers employed the term *emphylios polemos* (internal war) only to denote the armed conflict between the emperor and the usurper Bardas Skleros who rebelled to usurp the throne of the imperial state.[35] This terminological choice was related with the fact that, even though Samuel had rebelled as a Roman subject from a Byzantine point of view, he did not seek to usurp the throne but to create an independent realm on Roman soil. His movement of political autonomy as king of the Bulgars deprived him of his status as a Roman subject and attributed to the war between him and the emperor of Constantinople the traits of "interstate" warfare, as I shall suggest in more detail later. For the time being, suffice it to say that Byzantine authors reserved the term *emphylios polemos* for those armed conflicts, which were caused by rebellious subjects aiming not at secession from imperial rule but at its usurpation.

32 Ibid., pp. 302-3.

33 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 328, 57-63; cf. Psellos, *Chronographia* I, 4, ed. Impellizzeri, p. 39.

34 On Byzantine approaches to war between Christian peoples as an internal armed conflict, see Stouraitis, "Byzantine War against Christians", *passim*.

35 Ibid. p. 339, 64-66; cf. Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Büttner-Wobst, p. 548, 2-6.

1 Legal-Political and Socio-ideological Aspects of Civil War

For a better understanding of the structural role of civil war in the imperial system, one needs to take into account the fact that both the state and the political system was centred upon the Roman imperial office. This office was not simply the higher institution of the legal-political and territorial entity Roman Empire, but also the institution that until the breakdown of centralized imperial authority in 1204 defined the image and the fluctuating boundaries of a united Roman polity.

From the 4th century (but already long before that) up to the fall of Constantinople in 1204 and the consequent disintegration of centralized Roman rule, membership of the Roman political community was principally determined in the Byzantine view by the status (both legal and geopolitical) of being a loyal subject of the Roman emperor within the territorial boundaries of his authority. This is demonstrated by the fact that, even though the borders of the imperial realm and the number of its subjects underwent major changes over the centuries, the Constantinopolitan discourse of Roman identity was consistently confined to those populations residing within the territorial boundaries of the legal-political authority of the imperial office.[36] Within this framework, from the numerous internal armed conflicts that contested the rule of the imperial city-state not a single one disputed the main tenet of the system of government, i.e. the concentration of supreme political power in the hands of the holder of the imperial office.

Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that the argument of the vast majority of Byzantine internal armed conflicts from the 4th to the 12th century was the leadership of the imperial state, i.e. the person of the emperor. This aspect of late Roman and Byzantine civil war is significant if we consider that the imperial realm represented a large, centripetal and hierarchical order with fluctuating borders, whose populations were designated by regional, religious and ethno-cultural diversity. The fact that, for centuries, civil war within the Roman realm was rarely a question of rebels claiming autonomous rule over a part of the imperial realm, but rather of who was going to become the ruler of

36 A gradual change of attitude in this matter is attested in the historiography of the period from the late 10th century onwards; see Page, *Being Byzantine*, pp. 79-85, 104-106; Stouraitis, "Reinventing Roman ethnicity", pp. 79-85. For this reason, after the Empire's disintegration in 1204 those Roman populations that were not subjects of the emperors of Nicaea and (after 1261) Constantinople were purposefully deprived of the Roman label by Byzantine historiographers and the wars against their autonomous rulers were not defined as civil wars (*emphylioi polemoi*); see Page, *Being Byzantine*, pp. 102-121, 146-158; Kyriakidis, "The Idea of Civil War", pp. 243-256.

the empire, points to an established consensus that underpinned the power relations between the political centre and the provincial periphery. This consensus was well established in the Roman Empire by the 4th century, since it had already been consolidated during the period of the Principate as a result of the gradual political integration of provincial elites into the Roman system of government and the configuration of an empire-wide Roman ruling elite, whose common identity was grounded on active political participation and a common Greco-Latin higher culture.

The consensus among the members of this elite was decisively cemented through the transition of charismatic power from the person of the emperor to the office in the early Principate.[37] This was complemented by the gradual openness of the imperial throne to persons of all regional and ethnic backgrounds that could work their way up into the elite through the army or the senate. As a result, the institutional charisma of the Roman imperial throne was consolidated through a balanced combination of the ideological loyalty of the members of the Romanized provincial elites to the notion of empire and of pragmatic constraints. The latter referred to the imperial centre's monopoly over economic and military resources, which constantly circumscribed and thus reproduced the ideological allegiance of distant provincial elites to the system of empire. As long as the imperial power maintained centralized control over superior military power, anyone willing to take the risk of rebellion, i.e. of civil war, and to contest the imperial regime had a much better potential if he did it within the framework of Roman political discourse, as a Roman that sought to take advantage of the system's military resources to usurp the throne. Any effort to contest the territorial unity of the imperial realm, and thus also the predominant Roman political discourse as a leader of a regional or ethnic movement relying on regional or ethnic resources, was condemned to face the superior military power of the imperial field army and, as a matter of fact, to fail.[38]

The importance of centralized control over military force for the cohesion of the Empire is reflected in the fact that during the long 12th century – in particular the last quarter – a large number of rebellions occurred that aimed at provincial autonomy due to the obviously diminishing military capacity of the imperial office.[39] Between 330 and the disintegration of the centralized

37 On the transition of charismatic power from the person of the emperor to the office, see Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, pp. 27f.

38 On rebellions of secession during the Principate, see Dyson, "Native Revolts", pp. 239-74.

39 An overview of these rebellions in Treadgold, *History*, pp. 656f.; see also the last part of this chapter.

imperial state of Constantinople in 1204, at least 90 small-scale and large-scale rebellions can be documented (this makes an average of one per decade).[40] For answer to the question as to why the (allegedly) non-warlike Christian Romans took up arms so often against each other, we need to turn to Byzantine political ideology and the function of the political system.

The debate on Byzantine political ideology[41] has focused on the question of whether the function of the imperial political system was determined by latently out-lived "quasi-constitutional" norms (*Verfassungsnormen*) of the Roman *res publica*, which made the emperor a simple administrator of the imperial state, or by the *Kaiseridee*, the ideal of divinely-ordained imperial autocracy based on the model of sacral rulership. This debate provided two diverse approaches to the politico-ideological aspect of rebellion and civil war. In the first approach, rebellion and civil war are considered as the expression of a quasi "constitutional" right of the Roman people to dethrone an emperor who is deemed unworthy to rule and therefore does not enjoy the *consensus omnium* of the polity (*politeia*).[42] The second approach relates the violent overthrow of an emperor with the very absence of constitutional, legal-political, norms by the process of imperial succession. The notion of divine selection of the ruler was not only there to hinder the articulation of such norms but, indeed, underpinned the openness of imperial succession by legitimizing actions of any kind, including violent ones, in the process.[43]

Beck's theory is based on a fairly anachronistic distinction between a secular republican sphere, which principally determined Byzantine political reality, and a fictitious overstructure of divinely-ordained rule, which was employed to safeguard the imperial office.[44] According to this theory, the absence of any political institution of popular participation in the governance of the Byzantine republican polity was counterbalanced by the recurrence of rebellion. The

40 On lists of Late Roman and Byzantine civil wars, see Szidat, *Usurpator tani nominis*, pp. 413-16 (list of usurpers); Treadgold, "The Reluctant Warrior", pp. 231-3 (list of civil wars); cf. Cheynet, *Pouvoir*, pp. 20-145 (includes military rebellions, but also popular revolts and coups d'état from 963 to 1210); Mpourdara, *Καθοσιώσις*, pp. 35-127 (includes rebellions and coups d'état from 867 to 1056).

41 An overview of this debate with bibliography in Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, pp. 8-15.

42 On this argument see Beck, *Senat und Volk*, passim; idem, *Res publica Romana*, passim; idem, *Das Byzantinische Jahrtausend*, pp. 33-86; cf. Karayannopoulos, *Η πολιτικη θεωρία των Βυζαντινών*, pp. 13-24. Beck's theory was recently defended and elaborated in A. Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic. People and Power in New Rome*, Cambridge, Mass. 2015.

43 Fögen "Das politische Denken", pp. 52-82.

44 Ibid. p. 81; On the interrelation between autocratic and republican tenets in the late Roman imperial system, see Gizewski, *Zur Normativität und Struktur*, pp. 36-210.

latter is considered to be a normatively justified, customary political mechanism that de facto made the imperial office controllable by the people in the last instance.

The main flaw of the "republican theory" is that it fails to see that the increasing numbers of rebellions in the medieval Eastern Roman Empire was rather a symptom of the function of a political system which lacked both the idea and the institution of a representative political body that could decide and legitimize the enthronement or dethronement of an emperor on behalf of the whole community. From a politological point of view, rebellions of usurpation (just like coups d'état) became a main political means to claim the imperial throne because the emperor did not enjoy legitimacy in the classical sense but only acceptance, that is, the provisional consent of concrete qualified groups to a person's authority to rule.[45]

In the case of the Roman/Byzantine emperors the groups that ceremonially expressed the *consensus omnium*, the acceptance of the emperor, were the senate, the army and the citizenry of Constantinople (with an incrementally weighing role of the Church from the 5th century on). These groups did not, and could not, build (and also none of them represented separately) an authoritative institution that could bestow on a person the right to rule or, alternatively, dethrone an emperor in a binding manner on behalf of the whole Roman political community. The absence of an authoritative institution that would represent all politically influential groups in this matter means that the emperor enjoyed only provisional acceptance. Any of the aforementioned groups or parts of them could withdraw loyalty to the ruler at any time and pursue his deposition. Not even dynastic rights and acclamation of an emperor by his predecessor, which usually meant acceptance by an already dominant power network, could provide authentic legitimacy and protect a ruler from rebellion.[46]

In the 10th century, for instance, when Basil II took over the imperial throne after the death of John I Tzimiskes (976) as the legitimate heir of the so-called Macedonian dynasty, the longest dynasty in the empire's history, he was immediately contested by a large-scale rebellion initiated against him by the high-ranking officer Bardas Skleros (976-979). Skleros took advantage of the fact that army units in the province of Mesopotamia were willing to withdraw their acceptance of the dynastically legitimate ruler and to acknowledge him

45 On the difference between the concept of legitimacy (in its classical non-Weberian sense) and the concept of acceptance, see Flaig, *Den Kaiser herausfordern*, pp. 184-89; idem, "Konzeptionalisierung der Usurpation", pp. 15-6.

46 Ibid., pp. 16-18.

as the new potential ruler of the imperial realm.[47] A different case is the civil war between Michael II and Thomas the so-called Slav. The latter sought to usurp the throne from Michael II whose enthronement had been the result of a successful coup against his predecessor Leo V (814-820).[48] During the conflict Michael maintained the support of the capital, of the field units of the imperial *tagmata* (regiments) as well as of some thematic armies, while his opponent profited from the support of the Anatolikon unit and other provincial forces in Asia Minor.[49] In both aforementioned cases, the legitimate ruler of the imperial realm was equally to be decided only by the outcome of the three-year long armed conflict.

An interesting insight into the politological aspect of the emperor's legitimacy or, better said, lack thereof in Byzantine civil wars over the throne can be found in Psellos' report on the conflict between Isaac Komnenos and Emperor Michael VI in 1057. The author used the verb *antibasileuō* (to reign as a rival king) to describe the actions of the rebel and the verb *tyranneō* (to rule as a tyrant), usually related to usurpers, to refer to the reigning emperor.[50] Psellos' utterance needs to be examined under the prism of the Byzantine discursive model of *taxis* (order) – *ataxia* (disorder).[51] From a legal-political perspective, the rule of the divinely-ordained reigning emperor represented the legitimate order (*taxis*), insofar as the ruler was regarded as an embodiment of the polity and its laws. Within this framework, a rebel that contested the lawful ruler of the Roman *politeia* (polity) was illegitimate in legal-political terms, in other words, a tyrant. This is clearly reflected in the severe punishments included in Byzantine law against usurpers.[52]

Nonetheless, Psellos – like any Byzantine author writing about a rebellion with the advantage of some hindsight – was free to turn this image upside down due to the fact that an emperor was legitimate only as far as he was not contested. Once a rebellion of usurpation was under way and civil war broke out, the legal-political illegitimacy of the contender was to be arbitrarily decided only by the outcome of the armed conflict. As a result, anyone in a position to build a network of military support by securing the allegiance of

47 Seibt, *Die Skleroi*, pp. 37-8; Blysidou, *Αριστοκρατικές οικογένειες*, pp. 196-97.

48 Codoñer, *The Emperor Theophilos and the East*, pp. 40-59, 183-89.

49 Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 229.

50 Michael Psellus, *Epitaphius encomiasticus in patriarchem Michaelem Cerullarium*, ed. K.N. Sathas, *Ἐπιτάφιοι Λόγοι,* vol. 4, Athen/Paris 1874, p. 362, 7; cf. Cheynet, *Pouvoir*, pp. 178-9.

51 Ahrweiler, *L'ideologie*, pp. 165-66; Mpourdara, *Καθοσίωσις*, p. 134; Cheynet, *Pouvoir*, pp. 184-90.

52 Mpourdara, *Καθοσίωσις*, pp. 142f.

one or more army units was able to employ a valid or less valid pretext and instigate a civil war by accusing the reigning emperor of handling political affairs against God's will and the common interest.[53]

In the discourse of the rebellious side, the reigning ruler became an illegitimate *tyrannos* (tyrant) that had caused disorder with his rule, while the usurper represented himself as the God-chosen vindicator of order. The propagandistic discourse about a bad ruler that had lost divine favour was the means to justify the – from a legal-political point of view illegitimate – act of rebellion. Nonetheless, a rebel's propaganda, i.e. the validity or invalidity of his accusations, could hardly determine a reigning emperor's dethronement. In other words, the outcome of rebellion and civil war had little to do with whether an emperor was broadly perceived as a good ruler or not. It was principally a matter of military means and a strong power-network that would provide victory on the battlefield and firm control over the imperial army and administration afterwards.

In the aftermath of the conflict, a dethroned emperor or an unsuccessful usurper could be defamed as an incompetent ruler or an illegitimate tyrant, respectively. The winner, as the divinely-ordained holder of the imperial throne, had at his disposal the mechanisms of imperial propaganda as well as the necessary symbolic capital in order to promote his claim to legitimacy based on the axiom that his victory proved that he had acted according to God's will and in favour of the common good. In this regard, one needs to distinguish between the potential of the winner of a civil war to construct a certain image for himself and his opponent after the conflict and the ability of Byzantine historiographers to apply the image of the tyrant to whomever they wished (emperor or usurper) – according to their own personal political or ideological preferences – in texts written much later.[54] For instance, Constantine V's victory in the civil war against Artabasdos (741-743) certainly reaffirmed the emperor's legitimacy and the usurper's illegitimacy in the eyes of his contemporaries, as demonstrated by the fact that he did not face any serious revolts in the rest of his reign. Nonetheless, in the early 9th century chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor, the image of the tyrant is attributed to the emperor due to his iconoclastic beliefs.[55]

Within this politological framework, it becomes evident that the frequency of civil wars was mainly a product of the central role that the military elite and the army played in the system of Empire, especially from the late 7th century

53 Cheynet, "Se révolter légitimement contre le »Basileus«?", pp. 62f.

54 Cf. Cheynet, *Pouvoir*, p. 181.

55 Stouraitis, "Bürgerkrieg", pp. 169-70.

onwards.[56] Armed rebellions of usurpation had little to do with a customarily regularized means of popular control over the imperial office, but were rather the result of personal ambitions and conflicting factional interests as well as of the relocation of military and political power among members of the elite of service.[57] The latter did not hesitate even to ally with the enemies of the Empire in order to realise their personal ambition to become emperor.[58] The politically contingent character of the phenomenon is also indicated by statistics demonstrating that from the numerous rebellions and civil wars in the Empire fewer than one out of five ended with the deposition of the reigning emperor.[59] This lived experience urged the military magnate Kekaumenos in the late 11th century to warn of the dangers of rebellion against the militarily powerful emperor of Constantinople in his so-called *Strategikon*.[60]

In light of this, the main means of protection against rebellion and civil war, as a potential threat for every emperor, was to maintain a strong personal power network of allegiances with members of the most important families of the ruling elite, as well as firm control over standing army units.[61] This was achieved through a balanced redistribution of political and economic resources, alongside the cultivation of a sophisticated propagandistic image of the ruler as a patron of common good. The variation of the motifs of imperial propaganda from one ruler to the other operated to this end and always within a conservative political framework intended to perpetuate the system's autocratic tenet. The adaptive re-styling of each emperor's self-representation as an *ideal* ruler reflects the effort of the power faction around the emperor to respond to current socio-political issues.[62]

Despite the predominant role of the military elite of service in the instigation of civil wars, officers of lower rank and social status could also exceptionally take advantage of the army's power potential and claim the imperial throne.

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56 Cf. Szidat, *Usurpator*, pp. 237-39; Kaegi, *Military Unrest*, passim.

57 Szidat, *Usurpator*, pp. 257-68; Winkelmann, *Quellenstudien*, pp. 34-97; Cheynet, *Pouvoir*, pp. 13-4.

58 E.g. see the large-scale civil wars of Thomas the Slav and Bardas Skleros, in which both contenders allied with Armenian, Georgian and Arab forces; Lemerle, "Thomas le Slave", pp. 285-86, 294-95; Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 233; Kamer, *Emperors and Aristocrats*, p. 36; Seibt, *Die Skleroi*, p. 38.

59 Treadgold, "The reluctant warrior", p. 225.

60 Kekaumenos, *Consilia et Narrationes*, ed. and transl. Charlotte Roueché (Sharing Ancient Wisdoms/SAWS, 2013), pp. 64-76

61 On the role of patrimonial relations in the construction of the emperor's power network, see Gizewski, *Zur Normativität und Struktur*, pp. 208-9.

62 McCormick, "Analyzing Imperial Ceremonies", pp. 1-20.

The best example is the humble centurion Phokas, a person of lower rank and social status who managed to take advantage of an army mutiny on the Danube frontier in order to march against Emperor Maurice in 602. His success in establishing himself on the throne for a longer period of time (602-610) was a result of his ability to capitalize on the army's discontent, while the emperor was deprived of support and acceptance both in the army as well as in Constantinople.[63]

In this regard, it is interesting that Phokas' retrospective depiction in the sources is dominated by the image of an illegitimate tyrant both during his rebellion as well as during his reign – as opposed to the image of Heraclius, the representative of the Roman provincial elite, that rebelled against him in 610 and dethroned him.[64] This stance of Constantinopolitan historiographers seems to be closely connected with Heraclian propaganda that was facilitated by the rebel's lower social status and his animosity against the senatorial elite, which made him a semi-barbarian in culture in the eyes of Constantinopolitan authors.[65]

Contrary to the army, the common people in the Empire, especially the peasantry masses of the provincial countryside, had a marginal political role in internal armed conflicts. Only parts of the Constantinopolitan citizenry could de facto exercise greater political influence due to proximity to the emperor and their role as city-militia in the defence of the capital.[66] Their stance was important for the ruler's potential to control the city as a key for preserving his throne against the usurper. With the exception of the *Nika*-conflict, where they represented the rebellious side, the evidence indicates that in most civil wars the Constantinopolitan citizenry was controlled by the faction of the ruling emperor and supported him against the rebel. However, when the rebellious side was advancing and the reigning ruler was deprived of important political and military support, the shifting loyalty of the citizenry could accelerate his fall. During the attack of Phokas against Emperor Maurice in Constantinople in 602, for instance, the loss of support by the elite troops of the *excubitores* in the city deprived the latter of an important means to maintain control of the capital and the support of its populace.[67]

63 On Phokas' rebellion, see Olster, *The Politics of Usurpation*, passim.

64 Olster, *The Politics of Usurpation*, pp. 1-21; Meier, "Kaiser Phokas", pp. 141-76.

65 Simokattes, *Historia*, ed. ed. Ch. de Boor/P. Wirth, *Theophylacti Simocattae Historiae*, Stuttgart 1972, VIII 10, 4. See Meier, "Kaiser Phokas", pp. 138-174.

66 On the political action of urban populations in the empire, see Gregory, "Urban Violence in Late Antiquity", pp. 138-61; Cheynet, "La colère du peuple a Byzance", pp. 25-38.

67 Olster, *The Politics of Usurpation*, p. 136.

2 Towards a Typology of Byzantine Civil War

Byzantine civil wars can generically be categorized into two major types: a) leadership conflicts (where issues of ideology and resources played a secondary role), and b) resource–ethnic conflicts (concerning rebellions of secession).[68] Up to the fall of the Western part of the empire, the traditional charisma of the imperial office was for the most time de facto divided between East and West, whereas during the short period of the tetrarchy a further division of every part between an emperor and a co-emperor had occurred. As a result, civil war mainly referred to internal strife between reigning emperors or their successors.[69] This changed definitively after the 5th century, when the Roman emperor of Constantinople held the charismatic power of centralized imperial rule alone. From that point onwards, civil war that contested the ruler of the imperial realm referred exclusively to a struggle between the reigning monarch and one or more rebels that aimed to depose him.

Civil wars of leadership are the predominant type in the Byzantine case, since the majority of internal armed conflicts from the 4th to the 12th centuries concerned the person of the ruler. Conversely, no ideological civil wars are attested, i.e. conflicts where the rebellious side was motivated by the goal of disputing the political system of imperial autocracy in order to restore the rights of the senate or reinstate other political institutions of the Roman Republic.[70] Only in the civil wars of the tetrarchy did the ambition of a contender to become sole ruler cause a change in the system of government. At the end of these large-scale civil wars that lasted from 306 to 324, the victor, Constantine I, had united the whole of the empire under his autocratic rule, thus giving a temporary end to the system of divided imperial rule that Diocletian had introduced in 293.[71]

If the majority of Byzantine civil wars were wars of leadership caused by personal ambition to rule the empire, their ideological dimension should rather be sought in the political agenda of the rebel (usually the leader of an elite faction), through which he tried to take advantage of current socio-political issues in order to legitimize his personal claim to the throne and deprive the reigning emperor of acceptance. In this regard, religious issues seem to

68 Cf. the typological model in Angstrom, "Towards a Typology", pp. 104-5, 112, according to which a civil war of the one type may bear aspects of all other types as well.

69 Szidat, *Ususrpator tantis nominis*, pp. 211-12.

70 Cf. Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, p. 86; Winkelmann, *Quellenstudien*, pp. 96.

71 On detailed accounts of these civil wars with an overview of recent bibliography, see Lenski, "The Reign of Constantine", pp. 61-77; Stephenson, *Constantine*, pp. 113-82.

have played an incrementally important role in the ideological justification of rebellions of usurpation from the 4th century onwards. Two major patterns can be distinguished here: the antagonism between Christianity and paganism that dominated the discourse of Christian authors up to the 5th century, and the motif of orthodox vs. heretic in the period thereafter.

For instance, Constantine I's struggle for monocracy was presented by Eusebius and all later historiographers that adopted the latter's normative approach to these wars as wars motivated by the vision of Christianizing imperial rule. Constantine introduced Christian rituals into the religious practices of the Roman army, obviously in an effort to take advantage of an existing Christian element in some of units and to further entrench his control over them.[72] His growing allegiance to the Christian God during the civil wars provided him with a new religious-ideological idiom that he employed to underpin his claim to sole rulership. Nonetheless, these civil wars were hardly caused by the ideological goal of substituting paganism with Christendom. The marginal role of a religious-ideological motive is demonstrated by the emperor's lack of interest in pursuing the elimination of paganism in the Empire after his military triumph and up to the end of his reign.[73]

In a similar manner, Christian historiography presents the civil war of the years 392-394 between the emperor of the East Theodosius I and the usurper Eugenius who was acclaimed emperor in the West with the support of the German master of soldiers Arbogast as a quasi-ideological civil war between a Christian and a pagan faction in the Empire.[74] Conversely, the pagan historian Zosimus has little to say about religious controversy as the cause of this conflict.[75] The fact that Theodosius I introduced a policy of prohibition of pagan religious practices by law in November 392[76] along with the tolerant attitude of Eugenius towards paganism implies a religious pretext for the conflict. Nonetheless, the image of a religiously-driven civil war is not without flaws.[77] Eugenius, probably a Christian himself, maintained good relations with both the powerful bishop of Milan Amrbosius who initially acknowledged him as

72 Shean, *Soldiering for God*, pp. 283-88.

73 On the tolerant aspects of Constantine's political attitude, see DePalma-Digeser, *The Making of a Christian Empire*, pp. 125-33.

74 Sozomen, *Church History*, eds. J.Bidez /G.C. Hansen, *Sozomenus historia ecclesiastica* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 50), Berlin 1960, VII 22, 4-5; cf. Kolia–Dermitzaki, *Ο βυζαντινός «ιερός πόλεμος»*, pp. 121-22.

75 Zosimus, *Historia*, ed. Paschoud, p. 4.

76 *Codex Theodosianus*, eds. Th. Momsen/P.M. Meyer, Berlin 1905, XVI, p. 10.

77 Ibid., pp. 467-69; on a deconstruction of the Christian narratives, see Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, pp. 93-131.

emperor as well as with the pagan senatorial elite.[78] His motive was personal leadership in the West – not the restoration of paganism – for which reason he sought recognition by Theodosius.[79]

Eugenius' growing pro-pagan attitude was mainly a result of Theodosius' procrastinatory political attitude which was due to the latter's careful calculation as to the pros and cons of a potential armed conflict that would secure his political and military control over the whole Empire.[80] After deciding to wage a war against Eugenius, Theodosius had his younger son Honorius proclaimed co-emperor in 393.[81] This move was intended to downgrade Eugenius to the status of an illegitimate usurper and thus to justify an armed conflict against him in political terms. In light of this, Eugenius' openness towards Christians and pagans as well as the mixed religious identity of both armies (for instance, Theodosius relied on heretic Arian or, partly also, pagan Gothic soldiers)[82] point to a loose religious context that deconstructs the representation of ideologically monolithic religious-political parties in the Christian discourse. Within this framework, the prohibition of pagan religious practices by Theodosius I seems to have been a political move intended to win over the support of Ambrosius and the western Christians, so to deprive Eugenius of the ability to integrate them in his power network in the forthcoming fight.[83]

In both aforementioned cases, one could plausibly argue that we are dealing with civil wars of leadership in which the ideological aspect of religious policy played a secondary role in configuring the opposite parties in the struggle. The representation of these power conflicts as religious civil wars should rather be attributed to the need of Christian authors to ideologize the Roman emperor's actions in a context of antagonism between a flourishing Christendom and a fading paganism. The main goal of this discourse was to entrench the conflation of Christian and Roman political ideals at the level of the power elite.[84] For this reason, Theodosius I's victory in the civil war against the Christian pretender Maximus, which preceded the civil war with Eugenius, was equally

78 Szidat, "Die Usurpation des Eugenius", pp. 492, 494.

79 Rufinus, ed. E. Schulz-Flügel, *Rufinus, Historia monachorum sive de vita sanctorum partum* (Patristische Texte und Studien 34), Berlin 1990, p. 11, 31; Zosimus, *Historia*, ed. Paschoud, p. 4; cf. Szidat, "Die Usurpation des Eugenius", pp. 492-93.

80 Szidat, "Die Usurpation des Eugenius", pp. 499-503.

81 Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser*, p. 281; Szidat, "Die Usurpation des Eugenius", p. 494.

82 Gabba, *Per la storia dell' esercito romano*, pp. 99-100, 103; cf. Szidat, "Die Usurpation des Eugenius", pp. 504-5.

83 Szidat, "Die Usurpation des Eugenius", pp. 493-94.

84 Cf. the analysis in chapter 2 on "State War Ethic and Popular views on Warfare" in the current volume.

presented by Christian authors as a sign of God's will and divine support to the person of the emperor – even though the contenders were both Christians in this case.[85]

The role of historiographical hindsight in the religious ideologization of civil war becomes evident in the period of Iconoclasm when the justification pattern was defined by the dichotomy of orthodox vs. heretic. The armed rebellions against the Iconoclast emperors Leo III and Constantine V are overwhelmingly presented as ideological civil wars in the accounts of Iconophile authors. According to Theophanes the Confessor and Patriarch Nikephoros, divine zeal motivated the armies of Hellas and the Cibyrrhaeots to rebel against Leo III in 727 due to his policies against the holy icons.[86] Iconoclasm was also presented as the cause of the large-scale armed conflict (741/2-743/4[87]) between Constantine V, Leo III's son and successor, and his uncle Artabasdos, head of the field army Opsikion.[88] The emperor was forced to flee to the province of Anatolikon when Artabasdos attacked him during their common preparation for a campaign against the Arabs. The rebel was able to take hold of Constantinople, where according to the common source of Theophanes and Nikephoros he restored the icons.[89]

A close look at the Iconophile discourse of the sources indicates, however, that the ideological goal of restoring orthodox Christian rule hardly provided the main motive for the outbreak of these rebellious movements. As has been shown, the pubic dispute over the veneration of the Icons did not start in 726 in the form of an imperial edict of prohibition, but only in 730.[90] Even if Leo III had started engaging in theological debates over the issue of the veneration of images in Constantinople as soon as 726, it is highly improbable that such debates, which would take some time to take the form of a polemic between emperor and Church, would become a major religious-political issue empire-wide within less than a year, thus motivating a provincial rebellion against

85 Orosius, *Historiae adversum Paganos*, ed. K. Zangmeister (Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 5), Hildesheim 1967 (reprint), VII 35, pp. 1-9.

86 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 405. Nikephoros, *Short History*, ed. Mango, p. 129.

87 On the debate over chronology, see Speck, *Artabasdos*, pp. 19-77; Füeg, *Corpus of the Nomismata*, pp. 14f.

88 Stouraitis, "Bürgerkrieg", pp. 168-70; Brubaker/Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, pp. 156-60.

89 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 415, 21-22; Nikephoros, *Short History*, ed. Mango, p. 134.

90 Brubaker/Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, pp. 117-35.

him.[91] Contrary to the casual connection of the rebellion of 727 with Iconoclasm by Iconophile authors, it seems more probable that the personal ambition of the leaders of the rebellion took advantage of provincial dissatisfaction due to heavy taxation of the western parts of the empire, which aimed to cover the needs of protracted warfare against the Arabs in the East.[92]

The religious-ideological background of Artabasdos' civil war is equally questionable. The projected image of the rebel in Theophanes' account as an orthodox protector of the holy dogmas points to the rebellion as the action of an orthodox faction seeking to depose the Isaurian dynasty because of its heresy.[93] If this was the case, one is left wondering why this faction and Artabasdos as its leader did not rebel earlier, but had remained faithful to Leo III for more than a decade after 730 when he had made his ideas against the veneration of the icons a matter of imperial policy. Constantine V's rise to power was not followed by harsh iconoclastic measures that could justify the timing of the reaction.[94] If Artabasdos sought to take advantage of the transitional period of succession to oppose the regime, the only evidence implying that his rebellion had a religious-ideological motive is the report on the restoration of the icons in Constantinople.[95]

However, this report – the true core of which needs not be doubted[96] – hardly proves that the civil war was the result of a religious-ideological movement against Iconoclasm.[97] This is evident if one seeks to discern the actual gain of the rebel from his symbolic religious practices in Constantinople intended to legitimize his usurpation of the throne. Artabasdos succeeded in occupying the imperial capital against the reigning emperor, but lost the civil war – a rare case among Byzantine rebels. This is probably the strongest indication that his movement was neither motivated by, nor was able to profit from, a strong religious-ideological party of opposition to Iconoclasm. Given the importance of controlling the imperial capital in Byzantine civil wars, as is reflected in the statistical fact that in the vast majority of internal armed conflicts over the throne the holder of Constantinople was the winner of the struggle, Artabasdos' fail-

91 Cf. Winkelmann, *Quellenstudie* pp. 42-44.

92 Brubaker/Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, p. 81.

93 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 415; cf. Rochow, *Kaiser Konstantin V.*, pp. 22-23.

94 Brubaker/Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, pp. 176-89.

95 On the argument against the restoration of images, see Speck, *Artabasdos*, pp. 77-109, 137-45. In favour of the authenticity of the report, Treadgold, "The Missing Year", pp. 87-93.

96 Brubaker/Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, p. 178, who distinguish the factuality of the report on the restoration of icons from its retrospective ideological interpretation by the Iconophile authors.

97 On this argument, see Treadgold, "Opposition to Iconoclasm", passim.

ure indicates that his rebellion hardly expressed a politicized version of the Iconophile disposition of a large part of the Byzantine society.

The main cause of this civil war of leadership was the rebel's personal ambition and it was his power position as the leader of the strongest field army unit within the empire that made the realization of his plans possible.[98] His rebellion represents the culmination of the process of decentralization of power during the major clash with the Muslims in the East from the late 630s onwards. Constantine V anticipated the problem and responded to this systemic danger after the end of the civil war by reforming the imperial *tagmata* (regiments) into a field army under the direct command of the emperor.[99] This proved a successful measure, since the emperor did not face any more large-scale rebellions during his reign, even though his Iconoclastic policies after 754 evidently provided strong religious-ideological grounds for the waging of a rebellion against him, i.e. for ideological civil war.

Religion played a more important ideological role in the practices of justification of Byzantine civil wars as well as in the extensive use of religious symbolism and rhetoric by the exhortation of the fighting parties on the battlefield.[100] The accounts on the siege of Constantinople during the conflict between Thomas the Slav and Michael II testify to the systematic employment of religious symbols and rhetoric for the exhortation of the emperor's soldiers.[101] Regarding the final battle of the civil war between Basil II and the rebel Bardas Phokas (987-989), it is reported that the emperor marched against the Roman armies with the icon of the Virgin in his hand.[102] Bardas Skleros, another rebel against Basil II, sought to justify the outbreak of his first rebellion against this emperor in the year 976 by propagating a religious vision that was obviously intended to underpin the allegiance and the morale of his soldiers in the forthcoming struggle with the emperor's army.[103]

These large-scale civil wars – lasting approximately three years each – provide an interesting insight into the role of resources in rebellions of leadership. If the resources of the imperial office, human and financial (i.e. imperial armies, imperial treasury and revenues from centralized taxation), secured an advantageous position for the reigning emperor at the beginning of the conflict, the rebel's resources for carrying out a war against the emperor pose a major issue.

98 Cf. Winkelmann, *Quellenstudie*, pp. 44-46.

99 Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 338f.

100 Stouraitis, "Bürgerkrieg", pp. 155-72.

101 Ibid. pp. 163-65.

102 Psellos, *Chronographia* I, ed. Impellizzeri, p. 16; cf. Stouraitis, "Bürgerkrieg", p. 159.

103 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, pp. 316-17; Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Büttner-Wobst, pp. 540-41.

A usurper did not only need acceptance and support by army units, but also the financial means to pay his soldiers for a longer period of time.[104]

In the case of large-scale civil war, as in the rebellions of Thomas the so-called Slav (821-823), Bardas Skleros (976-979) and Bardas Phokas (987-989), it was those officers' control over important units of the imperial field army that enabled them to swiftly establish control over important parts of imperial territory and their resources, namely to gain access to tax and other revenues of those areas.[105] As opposed to that, the fact that the warlord Bardas Phokas had been deprived of his military office long before his rebellion against Tzimiskes in 970 meant that he could only rely on regional allegiances and personal resources in his home province of Cappadocia in order to build an armed force.[106] Due to this evident lack of resources, his rebellion was swiftly crushed (roughly within one month) by the superior military power of the imperial office.

Conversely, the civil war between Basil II and Bardas Phokas (987-989) was marked by the unusual situation that the equilibrium of military power was in favour of the rebel that had the largest part of the field army units of Asia Minor under control. This deprived the imperial office of its traditional military superiority and compelled Basil II to employ his diplomatic skills along with the financial resources of the imperial treasury in order to hire a strong mercenary force of Varangians (4,000 or 6,000) that played a crucial role in the victorious outcome of the conflict in favour of the reigning emperor.[107]

As opposed to a rebel's social status and position in the army, the role of ethnicity in civil wars over the throne can rightfully be regarded as insignificant. In Byzantium, ethno-cultural affiliations or categorizations were subordinate to the dominant political discourse of Roman-ness. As a result, rebels in civil wars of leadership claimed the throne as Romans and not as representatives of ethnic or regional groups that sought to achieve ethno-political hegemony within the Empire. Arguments about the potential role of ethnic identities in certain conflicts, as for instance the conflict between Bardas Skleros and Basil II (976-979),[108] rather concern the rebel's ability to instrumentalize his ethno-cultural background at a regional level in order to

104 Szidat, *Usurpator*, pp. 240-41; Cheynet, *Pouvoir*, pp. 163-65.

105 Cf. Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 229-30; Blysidou, *Αριστοκρατικές οικογένειες*, pp. 196-97.

106 See note 8 above.

107 Poppe, "The Political Background to the Baptism of Rus", pp. 229-30.

108 On various arguments about the role of Armenian ethnicity in this civil war, see Kamer, *Emperors and Aristocrats*, pp. 35-6; Honigmann, *Die Ostgrenze*, pp. 149-50; Adontz, *Études arméno-byzantines*, p. 150.

recruit local supporters. Nonetheless, these practices indeed had nothing to do with an ethnic cause of civil war.

Ethnic discourse seems to have played a more important role in rebellions of secession where political reasons made the salience of the ethnic identity of the rebellious party inevitable. One should bear in mind, however, that medieval ethnic groups were usually non-stable and non-coherent entities where the politicization of ethnic identity was primarily a practice of elite networks with large segments of the ethno-culturally categorized populations not sharing an ideological attachment to the group. As a result, the agency of common cultural identity in movements of secession should be addressed with caution.

For instance, the designation of the movement of the Bulgar warlords, known as Kometopouloi, in 976 as an *apostasia* (defection)[109] allows for a designation of the protracted conflict that followed as a civil war of secession of the resource-ethnic type. According to the Byzantine discourse, the Bulgar magnates rebelled as subjects of the emperor with the aim not to contest the ruler of the imperial city-state of Constantinople, but the territorial integrity of his realm by cutting off at least a part of the territories in the central-western Balkans. These were – at least nominally – under Byzantine overlordship after John I Tzimiskes' victorious campaign of 971/2. The fact that the emperor simultaneously had to face large-scale rebellions of leadership by his army officers Bardas Skleros (976-979, 987-989) and Bardas Phokas (987-989) in Asia Minor seems to have played an important role in the success of the movement.[110] By the end of these conflicts, one of the four brothers, Samuel, had already asserted himself as the leader of an autonomous realm where a Bulgar elite ruled over various Slavic and non-Slavic populations.[111]

The pursuit of secession needs to be related in this case with the nominal subject status of the Bulgar populations as well as with the Bulgar elite's low degree of integration into the Roman system of Empire and the political culture of Constantinople, since this elite had enjoyed political autonomy and its own state formation on former Roman soil since the late 7th century. If the lack of political and cultural assimilation of the Bulgar magnates makes their rebellion a logical consequence, a vision of ethnic independency, that is, a Bulgar proto-national vision, then it can hardly be seen as the major political force behind it. The rebellion was primarily a result of the aspiration of regional magnates to regain monopolized control over the resources of areas in which

109 Cf. note 33 above.

110 Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, pp. 58-62.

111 Pirivatrić, *Samuilo's State*, pp. 199-210.

they had independently dominated for the past centuries. Samuel's consistent efforts to expand his rule over ethno-culturally mixed populations or the readiness of important Bulgar magnates to accept imperial titles and change sides in the course of the conflict indicates that the independence of an ethnically homogenous political entity was neither the main motive nor the outcome of the war. The instrumentalization of the established political tradition of Bulgar kingship at the level of a regional elite network was a means to enhance allegiance to Samuel's aspirations for centralized rule, while the predominately Slavic background of the populations in those areas certainly facilitated the regional recruitment of forces.

The fact that the protracted Bulgar war of Basil II acquired the traits of interstate warfare and has been treated as such in present-day research is justified by two facts: first, Samuel's movement was successful in creating an autonomous realm before the Roman imperial regime undertook intensive fighting against the rebellious side. Second, civil wars of secession in which ethnic discourse is instrumentalized to distinguish the rival parties are usually the ones that most resemble interstate warfare.[112] Nevertheless, one could plausibly argue that this conflict ended the way it had begun for the imperial power of Constantinople, i.e. as a civil war.

Basil II's actions in the concluding phase of the war between 1014 and 1018 demonstrate that he treated the Bulgar issue as an internal affair of the Roman imperial realm. Skylitzes reports two occasions where the emperor blinded Bulgar captives: at the pass of Kleidion in 1014, and in the vicinity of Pelagonia (probably 1017).[113] From a practical point of view, it seems more plausible that, if such a punishment was applied, it rather concerned the officers and not the entire Bulgar force. Nonetheless, it indicates the imperial intention to treat the Bulgars as Roman subjects, since blinding was a typical punishment for rebellious subjects in Roman law.[114] Moreover, in his edict of 1020 concerning the Bulgar Church, Basil II stated that "His (i.e. God's) kindness helped us a lot and brought that which was separated together, under one yoke, so that no damage is inflicted on the boundaries and the order which the emperors before us had appropriately established".[115] This statement legitimized the subjuga-

112 Angstrom, "Towards a Typology", p. 111.

113 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, pp. 349 and 353; cf. Stephenson, *The legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer*, pp. 2-6.

114 Herrin, "Blinding in Byzantium", pp. 60-5; Lampsides, *Η ποινή της τυφλώσεως παρά Βυζαντινοις*, pp. 34f.; Mpourdara, *Καθοσίωσις*, pp. 157f.

115 Gelzer, "Ungedruckte und wenig bekannte Bistumsverzeichnisse", p. 44.

tion of the Bulgars as a restoration of imperial authority over a recently defected part of the Roman imperial realm and its resources.

The battle of Mantzikert (1071) and the consequent loss of the imperial office's authority over the largest part of Asia Minor due to the Seljuk penetration opened a new phase, in which rebels were capable of defying centralized imperial rule.[116] The semi-autonomous regime in Antioch of the Byzantine military commander Philaretos Brahamios, as well as the Normand mercenary Roussel de Bailleul's movement in Asia Minor during the 1070's represent the first phenomena of the kind in this period.[117] The charismatic leadership of the Komnenoi emperors Alexios I (1081-1118), John II (1118-1143) and Manuel I (1143-1180) managed to keep the phenomenon of provincialism and separatism under control for the most part of the 12th century due to those emperors' ability to re-organize the military power of the imperial office and to lead the army personally on the battlefield with success.[118] However, the death of Manuel I triggered a process of instability at the imperial centre, which in conjunction with increasing external pressure led to the multiplication of movements of provincial autonomy from 1180 onwards, most of which de facto caused the permanent or temporary political secession of parts of the contracted imperial realm.

All these conflicts can be categorized as civil wars of the resources-ethnic type, in which the role of ethnic discourses should be soberly interpreted. For instance, in the rebellion of the Vlach chieftains Asen and Peter under Isaakios II Angelos (1185-1195), ethnic independence can hardly be seen as the main trigger of the rebellion. The Vlach magnates were able to instrumentalize the established political tradition of Bulgar kingship and to rely on ethnically mixed forces to create an independent realm consisting of Bulgar, Vlachs, Cumans and other Slavic populations. Instead of ethnic irredentism, the main pursuit of the Asenids was to exploit the military weakness and the administrative misjudgements of the imperial centre in order to establish autonomous control over certain regions of the imperial realm and their resources. To achieve this, they took advantage of a regional military elite network – which had emerged from the infrastructures of the imperial state – as well as of the local populations' dissatisfaction due to heavy taxation by the central government. Regional and supra-regional allegiances evidently played a major role in

116 On the weakness of centralized rule in this period see Lilie, "Des Kaisers Macht und Ohnmacht", pp. 9-120.

117 Hoffmann, *Rudimente*, pp. 5-20.

118 Cf. Stouraitis, "Narratives of John II Komnenos' Wars", *passim*.

the recruitment of armed forces capable of resisting the weakened military power of the imperial city-state of Constantinople.[119]

The potential of acquiring autonomous control over provincial resources also made members of the Byzantine provincial elite prone to defy or disavow the centralized authority of the imperial office in favour of autonomous or semi-autonomous control over their regions. For instance, for years the Gabras clan maintained an autonomous regime in the region of Trebizond during the reign of John II and showed no interest in reconnecting with the imperial centre before the emperor campaigned and forced them to accept his overlordship under the threat of arms.[120] The rebellions of Isaac Komnenos in the time of Andronikos I (1183-1185) and Theodoros Mankaphas in Philadelphia during the reign of Isaac II Angelos are also indicative of the new geopolitical status quo.[121] Even though both rebels initially represented their movements as rebellions of usurpation of the Roman imperial office, they came to claim an autonomous regional realm in Cyprus and Philadelphia, respectively. Moreover, they had no problem in allying with the enemies of the empire (Normans and Turks) in their effort to resist Constantinople's control over their region and its resources.

The phenomenon of provincialism and separatism cannot be understood properly if one overlooks the preeminent role of central control over superior military power in the unity of the Empire throughout the centuries. The radical contraction of the imperial realm from the late 11th century on had a major impact on the functionality of the system of centralized control over financial and human resources, which for centuries represented the foundation of the imperial office's institutional charisma. The gradual diminishing of the emperor's financial and military power during the long 12th century, which was only temporarily counterbalanced by the reforming activity of the three major Komnenian emperors and their personal charisma, set in motion a process that undermined this foundation and the predominance of the Roman political discourse of centralized rule. It was this process that transformed the role of civil war in the Empire from a phenomenon that until the 12th century had contributed to the reproduction of the imperial system to a conducive phenomenon for its disintegration.

119 Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, pp. 289-94; Van Antwerp Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, pp. 10-7.

120 Hoffmann, *Rudimente*, pp. 21-7.

121 Ibid. pp. 32-8, 66-8.

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CHAPTER 4

The Enemies of the Empire: Portrayed Images

Michael Grünbart

The expansion of the *Imperium Romanum* created a dichotomy between Roman citizens within the borders of the realm and barbarian outsiders, who sometimes became allied tribes or were even integrated into society.[1] Similar to other superpowers in the ancient world the Romans organized and dominated large parts of Europe and the Mediterranean basin. This unification created the notion of the civilised world (*romanitas* vs. *barbaricum*),[2] a notion that did not change under the Christian Roman emperors, but was transformed into a religious concept as well.[3] After the acceptance of the Christian faith in the 4th century the term "oikumene" combined both connotations (civilization and Christendom). Peoples and tribes living outside the borders of the Roman/Christian Empire were viewed as barbarians.[4] They were called *ethnē*, a term that was coined by the evangelist Matthew at the end of his gospel: "Therefore go and *make disciples* of *all* nations".[5] What does *ethnos*/*ethnē* mean? Does it include enmity? On the one hand, *ethnos* signifies an entity of others or foreigners, and can define peoples living outside Roman/Byzantine territories, a concept that can be found since the establishment of Constantine, the first Christian emperor (306-337); on the other hand "foreigner" (*ethnikos*) includes a religious concept, since the tribes outside the border of the Roman/Christian Empire did not follow the orthodox Christian

1 Bruns, *Rome and the Barbarians*; an exhibition visualized the interaction between them, see Aillagon (ed.), *Rome and the Barbarians* (with excellent maps); Maas, "Barbarians: Problems and Approaches".

2 Note the use of the abstract term against the neutral, indefinite expression *barbaricum*; the other or the enemy is often demonized, and the abstract *romanitas* points to a habit as well. However, *barbarism* also stretches to the lack of ability to speak properly. In general see Heather, "The Barbarian in Late Antiquity".

3 See the precise definition by Geary, "Barbarians and Ethnicity", p. 106: "The concept of 'barbarian' was an invention of the Graeco-Roman world, projected onto a whole spectrum of peoples living beyond the frontier of the empire."

4 Sánchez-Medina, "A Created Enemy", p. 128.

5 Mt 28:19.

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rites, but held pagan beliefs and natural religions.[6] But even conversion to the Christian faith did not bridge the gap between barbarians and Byzantines, as many military conflicts demonstrated in the following centuries.[7]

Nevertheless, Byzantine authors such as John Kaminiates in the 10th century evoke an image of peaceful coexistence between different *ethnē* after neighbouring tribes had been baptized. On the eve of the capture of the important trading town Thessalonica by Arabic troops, who arrived from the sea in 904, "the city was proof against any danger for the reasons stated. And in fact, ever since the sacrament of baptism had brought the Scythian people into the Christian fold and had made them share in the milk of true piety, the tumult of war died down…".[8] *Ethnikos* denotes persons foreign to both the inhabitants of the Byzantine Empire and to the idea of the political system. The term *barbaros* focuses on language and education,[9] connoting *lingua* and consecutively *mores* (ethics).

The Byzantine view preserved the Roman tradition.[10] The term *Rhōmaios* ("Roman") was used in order to distinguish the inhabitants of the Byzantine territory who spoke Greek[11] from all other ethnic and political entities. The Byzantine Empire was called *Rōmania*. Anna Komnene, for instance, introduced her father Alexios I by saying: "But now I am preparing with God's help to do battle with Rome's enemies; an army is being recruited carefully and thoroughly equipped."[12] Even Western sources of the High and Late Middle Ages defined the regions of the Balkans inhabited by Byzantines speaking Greek as *Romania*. The ethnic pride, that becomes apparent in high-style Byzantine literature, was mainly supported by the high civilized urban centre,

6 See Wolfram, "Byzanz und die Xantha ethne"; Ahrweiler, "Concepts of the Foreigner", p. 2. Lilie, "Fremde", pp. 95-6 (dividing foreigners into 5 groups); for the 11th century see Neville, *Heroes and Romans*, pp. 81-6 (7. Romans and their Enemies).

7 See Kaldellis, *Ethnography after Antiquity*, pp. 118 and 128-39 ("The Representation of Orthodox Barbarians: The Limits of "Christian Ecumenism" and the "Byzantine Commonwealth").

8 Ioannes Kaminiates, ed. G. Böhlig, *Ioannis Caminiatae De expugnatione Thessalonicae*, Berlin /New York 1973, 10, 58-60; Frendo/Fotiou, *John Kaminiates*, p. 17.

9 Ahrweiler, "Concepts of the Foreigner", p. 12. See Stiegemann/Kroker/Walter (eds.), *Credo. Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter*. See below regarding the Bulgarian ruler Simeon.

10 Constantinople in particular formed a multilingual and multi-ethnic melting pot; Moravcsik, *"Barbarische Sprachreste"*. See Kaldellis, *Ethnography after Antiquity*, pp. 117-18.

11 Cupane, "H ton Romaion glossa".

12 Anna Komne, *Alexias* III 6, 5, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 101-102: Sewter/Frankopan, *Alexiad*, pp. 92-3.

although it was a contact zone of many foreigners such as pilgrims, traders, mercenary soldiers, diplomats, Crusaders and even foreign rulers.[13] But all these arrivals were seen as visitors or travellers.[14]

In literature and popular imagination, as is reflected in the Alexander romance, beasts, monsters and never-seen creatures were living and causing discomfort;[15] and the *topographia christiana* of Kosmas Indikopleustes ("Cosmas who travelled to India"), written in the 6th century, added to the exotic perception of the borderlands.[16]

By defining otherness, opposition or even enmity, the question of self-definition, identity and characterization of power has to be kept in mind.[17] Historians used examples from the *barbaricum* to emphasize Roman/Byzantine values, or to compare peoples outside the empire in order to criticize their own society.[18] It should be added that usurpers were also enemies of the empire, because they opposed the ruler and caused disorder.[19]

1 A Short Historical Overview

In the course of the 3rd and 4th centuries, Roman presence along the natural borders of the Rhine and Danube faded away. Transformations in societies and various regions took place. New ethnic identities appeared, defined themselves, and created new social organisations and dominions opposing or accepting the Roman hegemony.[20]

Strategies of stabilizing Roman authority did not succeed: decentralization of power and the establishment of the tetrarchy by Diocletian (inaugurated in

13 Brief overview by Rapp, "A Medieval Cosmopolis".

14 Ciggaar, *Western Travellers to Constantinople;* Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople*.

15 Kazhdan/Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, p. 168.

16 Kosmas provides a description of the known world of the 6th century. For the concept of the world in Late Antiquity see Anderson, *The Christian Topography of Kosmas*, pl. LI (The inhabited earth) and other illuminations of the Florentine manuscript.

17 On the creation of identity in the Roman art see Schneider, "The Barbarian in Roman Art". For the Byzantine period I restrict to quote Stouraitis, "Roman Identity in Byzantium" discussing recent research on that subject.

18 Kaldellis, *Ethnography after Antiquity*, p. 117.

19 Both the otherness and opposition to existing rules are underlined by the extraordinary clothing of the usurper Andronikos (see n. 144).

20 This process is discussed in contributions collected by Pohl/Diesenberger (eds.), *Integration und Herrschaft*. Goths, Visgoths, Slaves and Franks are presented.

293) did not stop the erosion of the Roman dominion. The East-Roman or Byzantine Empire had to deal with many opponents and enemies from the time of Constantine to the middle of the 15th century, since its new centre at Constantinople was surrounded by changing political landscapes: in its first centuries, the Byzantine realm was beset by extensions of the so-called Migration Period, and the Goths in particular invaded parts of the Roman empire and erected their kingdoms in Gaul, Spain and Italy.[21] However, many Goths and Germans were hired by the East Roman emperor in order to serve as mercenaries. They formed a powerful and visible group in Constantinople and played an important role in internal politics.[22] The emperor Leon I (457-474) ordered troops and guards from Isauria (situated in Southeast Asia Minor), because he wanted to push back Western elements in the interior organization of the empire.[23]

After the loss of the Western part of the Roman Empire and the deposition of the last emperor in 476 Constantinople definitely overtook the idea of preserving and defending Roman identity. The capital of the Eastern part of the empire remained the only heir to the idea of *Kaisertum*. After the disastrous event of 410 – Alaric plundering Rome – Constantinople ultimately formed the stable and economic centre of the remaining Roman world. In the course of the 5th century it sustained its position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy as well: the patriarchate of Constantinople gained the second position after the papacy of Rome (discussed at the ecumenical council of Chalcedon in 451). From now on ecclesiastical and secular power formed a pair that influenced and stimulated both internal politics and foreign affairs in Byzantium.

Two ways of dealing with enemies of the empire were at hand: military or diplomatic actions, including the spiritual junction between emperors and foreign rulers which saved and preserved the realm in its existence for centuries.

The attempts of Justinian I (527-565) at rethinking and rebuilding the Roman Empire did not last long: the resources of the Eastern provinces and the long distances aggravating the provision of logistic support for military actions did not countervail to establish a homogenous dominion in the Mediterranean basin again. Prokopios, reflecting on the perception of barbaric incursions at court and the dilemma of imperial strategies, reports in his Anecdota:

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21 Ferris, *Enemies of Rome.* See the precise overview by Howard-Johnston, "Byzantium and Its Neighbours". On the relations between the Roman dominion and emerging kingdoms, Goetz/Jarnutz/Pohl, *Regna and gentes*.

22 Cameron/Long, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius*; Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops.*

23 Feld, *Barbarische Bürger.*

> And many a time, when a hostile army of Huns had enslaved and plundered the Roman domain, the generals of Thrace and Illyricum, after purposing to attack the retreating enemy, recoiled when they saw a letter from the Emperor Justinian forbidding them to make the attack upon the barbarians, they bring necessary to the Romans as allies against the Goths, it might be, or against some other enemy. As a result of this, these barbarians used to plunder and enslave the Romans in those parts as enemies, and then, taking with them their prisoners and the rest of their plunder, they would retire to their own homes as friends and allies of the Romans.[24]

It was a common conception and motif in historiography that the enemies were primarily interested in the wealth of East Roman towns and provinces and that they lacked a social organisation similar to the Byzantine structure/institutions. This bias was still present in 12th-century Byzantium: Manuel I invited the Seljuk ruler Kilij Arslan, who spent several weeks at the Golden Horn:

> Manuel, who knew that no barbarian is able to resist the temptation of gain, wished to magnify himself and to astound Kilij Arslan with the immense riches of the treasuries which overflowed on all sides of the Roman empire, and thus he displayed all the gifts which he had proposed to offer the sultan in one of the palace's splendid men's apartments.[25]

Another strategy for dealing with barbaric concupiscence emerged during the reign of Justinian. He intended to spread the Christian faith, a clear indication that religious matters supported political undertakings. Baptized barbarians had to overcome more constraints to fight against the Christian emperor. Missions to Arabia and Nubia are recorded as having the intention of Christianising local tribes.[26] However, in contrast to the idea of *restauratio imperii* the expansion and the consolidation of the Empire did not last long.

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24 Procopius, *Historia Arcana*, ed. G. Wirth/J. Haury), *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia*, vol. 3, Leipzig 1963, XXI, 26.

25 Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 68; Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium,* p. 68; Euthymios Malakes presents an oration dedicated to this event, see Magdalino/Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art", pp. 132-35.

26 Engelhard, *Mission und Politik in Byzanz*; Grünbart, "Missionen in Byzanz". See Christides, "The Image of the Sudanese" (a comprehensive collection of sources).

In the far West the Byzantine dominion was only partly re-established, since the Visigothic kingdom formed a stable unit until 711.[27] Although the Visigoths became Christians, they were not accepted by the Byzantines who regarded Arianism as heresy. Emperor Mauricius (582-602) made attempts to increase his influence in Visigothic Spain. The new Visigothic king Reccared (586-601) changed his kingdom to a Christian Orthodox realm causing problems for the Byzantines, since as a result they lost the traditional dichotomy of *romanitas* and barbarism. Nevertheless, inscriptions still conserve the Byzantine bipolar concept after Reccared's decision. An epigraph in the Archaeological Museum of Cartagena (dated 589/590) includes the line "The patrician Comitiolus commissioned their [the fortifications'] construction, dispatched by the Emperor Mauricius against the barbarian enemies (*hostes barbari*)."[28] Despite their conversion to the Roman church the Visigoths were (or had to be) defined as enemies. The political ideology of the Byzantine court evidently still needed the concept of otherness.

The eastern border had to be defended against the Sassanid Persians, who had established their political centre in the city of Ktesiphon (about 30 km southeast of Baghdad).[29] Since the 4th century, war and diplomacy with Persia had represented a steady challenge for the imperial agenda. The Persian world was normally recognized as an equal partner in cultural and political terms. The conflict between the East Roman and the Persian Empires, both following monotheistic religions, turned into a religious conflict that targeted places of veneration. The Persians conquered the holy city of Jerusalem in 614 and deported the True Cross to their capital. Heraclius reorganized his army, and succeeded in bringing the relic back to Byzantine territory in 629.[30]

The Sassanian Empire was overrun by Arabic tribes in the first half of the 7th century. The Arabs, who appear as "Sarakenoi" or "Araboi" in Byzantine sources, rapidly expanded and conquered prosperous Byzantine towns and provinces in the Eastern Mediterranean. From there they started their naval campaigns that led them to the Byzantine capital (667-669, 717-718). Although the Arabs were driven back during the 8th century, their presence was still recorded in the Byzantine sphere of influence. Until the recuperation of Crete in 961 the Aegean Sea was an unsafe territory due to piracy. Thessalonike

27 On the identity of Byzantines and Visigoths in Iberian Peninsula see Sánchez-Médina, "A Created Enemy".

28 Text and translation Sánchez-Médina, "A Created Enemy", p. 130.

29 Overviews by Dignas/Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*; on 6th century politics see Börm, "Der Perserkönig im Imperium Romanum".

30 Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*.

suffered a severe raid by Leon of Tripolis in 904.[31] Leon was born in Attaleia, the centre of the Byzantine maritime theme in Southern Asia Minor, but was captured by the Arabs and converted to Islam. In the Caliphate he was highly appreciated due to his naval experience and he commanded a fleet opposing Byzantine authority. John Kaminiates provides an eyewitness report, because he suffered capture and imprisonment by the Arabs.[32] Information on Arab customs and ways of living is unfortunately sparse. John generally speaks about *barbaroi*[33] that clearly demonstrates the usage of this word for "other" and "otherness".

After the period of so-called Iconoclasm (which ended in 842) the Byzantine Empire regained lost territories and started to settle and expand its influence.[34] The regression of the Muslim danger enabled the Byzantine government to focus on retrieving territory in the Balkans, where since the second half of the 6th century Slavs and Bulgarians had attacked the northern border at the river Danube and had made their way easily towards the south. Thessalonike, the commercial centre of the region, had suffered various attacks by the Slavs before its sack by the Muslims in 904.

In the middle of the 9th century Byzantine foreign politics was paired with missions to its neighbours (including missionaries). Patriarch Photius was responsible for the secondment of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius to non-Christianized territories. He achieved the baptism of the Bulgarian khan Boris II.[35] The 10th and the 11th centuries saw a concentration of Byzantine activities against the Bulgarians. Symeon of Bulgaria (893-927) knew the Byzantine political system well, because he had spent some time at the Constantinopolitan court as a youngster. He tried to establish himself as a ruler of Bulgarians and Byzantines. Symeon is characterized as an aggressive barbarian in Byzantine sources, although he spoke fluent, albeit heavily accented, Greek.[36] After his death in 927 relations between the Byzantine Empire and the Bulgarian realm

31 Tsamakda, *The Chronicle,* fol 111v: The Arabs (Ἀγαρήνοι) have conquered the town and escort prisoners to their fleet (στόλος Σαρακηνῶν). Note the different names given to the intruders. The Arabs are wearing turbans.

32 Frendo/Fotiou, *John Kaminiates*.

33 Kaldellis, *Ethnography after Antiquity*, pp. 30-3. On pre-Islamic Arabia, Christides, "Arabs as Barbaroi".

34 For the period of Iconoclasm, see Zuckerman, "Learning from the Enemy".

35 Stratoudaki/White/Berrigan, *The Patriarch and the Prince*; the letter includes instructions how to behave as a ruler (according to Byzantine standards) – on this account Photius provides insights into the Byzantine *Herrscherbild* as well.

36 Shepard, "The Ruler as Instructor", pp. 340 and 347-48.

began to ease. The marriage of Petar, son of Simeon, and Maria Lakapene, granddaughter of emperor Romanos, sealed a period of peace.

At the end of the 10th century tsar Samuel (997-1014) started campaigns against Byzantine territory. After two decades Basil II was able to end the actions against the Bulgars in 1018. The epithet *Boulgaroktonos* ("Bulgarslayer", attached to the name of Basil) emerged in 12th century Byzantium.[37] A new opponent appeared in the 11th century. The Turkish tribe of the Seljuks set foot in Byzantine provinces in the East. After the battle of Mantzikert in 1071, they took possession of former Byzantine territories and were constantly in conflict with the Byzantine emperor.[38]

During the period of the Komnenian dynasty (1081-1186) Byzantine politics were dominated by the movements of the Crusaders from the western parts of Europe.[39] The emperors tried to take advantage of them in order to reconquer lost regions in Asia Minor and Syria. The confrontation with the Latins left permanent (negative) impressions on both sides.[40] It led to the occupation of Constantinople in 1204 and the establishment of the Latin Empire of Constantinople.[41]

2 Foreigners at the Byzantine Court

The Byzantine Empire was ruled by a centralized government, and the emperor and all his officials resided in Constantinople which was the only megalopolis until the High Middle Ages. It formed both a melting pot and contact zone for persons from all corners of the known world. The centre of the Empire was continuously in need of manpower. Special reference needs to be made to the body- and palace-guards (*hetaireiai*) of the emperors from the 9th century onwards that consisted largely of foreigners (Khazars, Varangians, Hungarians, possibly Russ). Family names are indicators of such amalgamations. A distinct unit formed the palace guard of the Varangians, who were sent from Kiev to

37 Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer*, pp. 92-5. The expression was used in the heading of an epigram (dated around 1170): "On the triklinos, renovated by the Emperor Manuel, in order to serve as a refectory for the monks; there, alongside him, his grandfather the Emperor Alexios, his father the Emperor John, and the Bulgar-slayer Basil have been depicted", see Spingou, *Words and Artworks*, p. 130.

38 Peacock/Yildiz, *The Seljuks of Anatolia*; Stone, "Stemming the Turkish Tide" (on conflicts with the Seljuks reflected in orations of Eustathios of Thessalonica, 12th century).

39 Laiou, "The Foreigner and the Stranger".

40 Jeffreys/Jeffreys, "The 'Wild Beast from the West'".

41 Van Tricht, *The Latin "renovatio" of Byzantium*.

FIGURE 4.1 Folio 26v of the Chronicle of John Skylitzes, XIIth century; Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, matritensis graecus, Vitr. 26-2.
WITH KIND PERMISSION OF THE BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL, MADRID

Constantinople in 988 in order to support the emperor against the rebels Bardas Phokas and Bardas Skleros.[42]

Vladimir I and Basil II had formed an agreement that included Basil's daughter Anna marrying the Kievan prince. The Varangians were organised into a *tagma* and operated as auxiliary troops in the field and as the imperial bodyguard in the palace for the next two centuries. Over the years, men from Scandinavia and England (especially after the Norman Conquest in 1066) were enlisted, and they formed a significant element in the capital's society. Their trustworthiness is often lauded. Anna Komnene writes in her Alexias: "and as for the Varangians, who bear on their shoulders the heavy iron sword, they regard loyalty to the emperors and the protection of their persons as a family tradition, a kind of sacred trust and inheritance handed down from generation to generation; this allegiance they preserve inviolate and will never brook the slightest hint of betrayal".[43] Images of Varangians can be found in the Skylitzes Matritensis.[44] There is a depiction of the body of Leon V (813-820) being transported to the hippodrome of Constantinople with palace soldiers guarding the

42 Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*; Androshchuck, *Vikings in the East*.

43 Anna Komnene, *Alexias* II 9, 4 ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 79; Sewter/Frankopan, *Alexiad*, pp. 71-2.

44 Grabar and Manoussacas, *L'illustration du manuscript de Skylitzès*, nr. 507 (fol. 208: a woman from Thrace killing a Varangian), Tsamakda, *The Illustrated Chronicle*, Nr. 493;

building in the background. The depiction is anachronistic from the viewpoint of the creation of the manuscript in the 12th century. The military equipment (axes as described by Anna Komnene above) clearly leads to the identification of the palace guard as Varangians.

However, the imperial administration was prepared for hosting foreigners or exiled rulers from barbarian lands. Members of the Sassanian royal family, princes from Armenia, the offspring of Bulgarian khans (e.g. the aforementioned Symeon at the end of the 9th century) or nobles from the Ottoman dynasty found refuge within the walls of the imperial palace at the Golden Horn or they were kept there as hostages. Highborn foreigners were a frequent sight in the capital.[45]

Byzantine administration engaged intensively in dealing with foreigners and enemies both in the capital and abroad. A certain dignitary, mentioned in 9th-century documents, was called *barbaros* or *epi tōn barbarōn.* This was a high-ranking official that belonged to the palace personnel. His importance becomes evident, since he was responsible for supplying a mule for the imperial baggage train. In Constantinople a "house of the *barbaros*" is recorded: it served for the reception of foreign nobles, e.g. of Armenian princes, who paid a visit to the capital in the first third of the 10th century.[46] Many seals of this office-holder are preserved (dated up to the middle of the 10th century), some of them providing surprising iconography. Images like eagles, lions, dragons or griffins are common,[47] and in one unique case, the depiction of an elephant, possibly underlining the exotic character of the office holder.[48] It goes without saying that the organization of the imperial household was prepared to host foreign ambassadors.[49]

3 The Sources

Searching for images of the enemies of the Byzantine Empire causes some problems, since on the whole there is a shortage of evidence of pictorial sources depicting opponents and foreign rulers.[50] However, the empire faced

Grabar/Manoussacas, *L'illustration du manuscrit de Skylitzès,* Nr. 50 (fol 26v); Tsamakda, *The Illustrated Chronicle*, Nr. 50.

45 Shepard, "Manners Maketh Romans?", p. 137.

46 Oikonomides, "Some Byzantine State Annuitants", p. 22.

47 Ibid., p. 26.

48 Stavrakos, "The Elephant".

49 Tinnefeld, "Ceremonies for Foreign Ambassadors".

50 Heather, "The Barbarian in Late Antiquity".

attacks from many sides, as a short passage from Anna Komnene (12th century) illustrates. The emperor Alexios I had to deal with many peoples:

> For the Scyths from the north, the Kelts from the west and the Ishmaelites from the east were simultaneously in turmoil; there were perils, too, from the sea, not to mention the barbarians who dominated it or the countless pirate vessels launched by wrathful Saracens and sent to battle by ambitious Vetones. The latter regarded the Roman Empire with hostile eyes and all men look upon it with envy.[51]

The following overview is an attempt to collect data from various sources reflecting the change of habits of performing victory and supremacy and of dealing with foreigners or enemies and their reception.

3.1 *Archaeological Monuments and Mural Art*

Pictorial evidence can be found on archaeological sites (most of them in the capital).[52] The hippodrome of Constantinople formed – as did all other prosperous cities of Late Antiquity – a central stage for political performance. It was furnished with precious objects that referred to ancient history, both Greek and Roman, including mementos of great military successes against enemies. The emperor Theodosius I (379-395) added an Egyptian obelisk from Karnak (Tutmoses III. 1479-1425 BC) to the *spina* of the Constantinopolitan hippodrome. The column was erected in order to celebrate his victory over Maximus and Victor (388).[53]

The obelisk may reflect the interests of the Roman Empire in Egypt, but the more important message can be read and seen on the base, which was decorated with various scenes depicting the erection of the monument and actions in the hippodrome. On the north-western side of the base, foreign tribes are depicted kneeling under the imperial box. This imagery represents a standard theme in Roman iconography. The barbarians performing *proskynēsis* (bowing or prostrating oneself before a person of higher social rank) under the imperial balcony are offering gifts to Theodosius, who stands in the centre.[54] On the

51 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, XIV 7, 2, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 450; Sewter/Frankopan, *Alexiad*, p. 420.

52 See the overview by Sodini, "Images sculptées et propagande impériale".

53 Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon*, p. 65.

54 Proskynesis was the usual approach to the emperor, but it was not restricted to defeated enemies or foreign rulers; Byzantine officials performed it as well. See Vojvodić, "On the Presentations of Proskynesis".

FIGURE 4.2
Column of the Goths, Gülhane park, İstanbul.
PICTURE BY GEORGIOS THEOTOKIS

right side, Africans and Germans are wearing sheep-skin coats. On the left side men dressed in Phrygian caps and Persian tunics offer gifts to the emperor.[55] The barbarians represent the parts of the world: Germans and Persians stand for the Northern and Eastern regions, and the Africans for the South (this scheme corresponds with the perception of the world in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages). The Byzantine emperor dominates them and stands apart from them – the boundary between inside and outside is clearly defined.[56] Comparing these depictions with other sources there are no apparent differences between the subjugated tribes and foreign ambassadors. The hippodrome remained an imperial stage for performing victory and displaying captured enemies for the following centuries.

55 Kiilerich, *The Obelisk Base*, pp. 132-35; Sodini, "Images sculptées", p. 74 (illustration, nr. 20), referring to Balty, "Hiérarchie de l'Empire", p. 70.

56 See Magdalino, "Constantinople and the Outside World". In Roman art the division between the imperial/heavenly sphere and tributaries/subjects can be found as well, see e.g. the Gemma Augustea from the 1st century BC (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum).

FIGURE 4.3 Egyptian obelisk from Karnak at the Byzantine hippodrome, İstanbul. PICTURE BY MICHAEL GRÜNBART

Another landmark in the city's landscape is the so-called column of the Goths (still standing in the modern Gülhane park at İstanbul). The inscription mentions a victory against the Goths, but the date of its erection is unclear (either Claudius II Gothicus, 268-270, or possibly Constantine I, who defeated the Goths in 332, or his successor Constantius who ordered the erection of the monument to celebrate a victory).[57] The Latin inscription reads *Fortunae reduci ob devictos Gothos* ("To Fortuna, who returns by reason of victory over the Goths") and replaces an older one.[58]

The column of Arcadius was a further monument remembering the victory against the Goths: Arcadius defeated them under their leader Gainas in 400. The decoration of the column was completed after the death of the emperor in 408. Therefore, it was dedicated to Theodosius II (408-450). The design of

57 Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon*, p. 53.

58 Mango, "The Triumphal Way", p. 177.

this column follows the models of the Roman emperors Trajan and Marcus Aurelius.[59]

From the same period dates the Golden Gate that was integrated into the Theodosian wall. It seems that this monument celebrated the victory of Theodosios I against the usurper Magnus Maximus in 388. On the top of the gate the emperor was situated on a carriage drawn by four elephants, which had been given to him by Shapur III in 384 or 387.[60]

On the top of such columns statues often were put in place. Constantine was depicted as a standing figure imitating the light-bringing Helios; the column of Justinian (raised on the Augustaion, a place close to the Hagia Sophia and the imperial palace) was decorated with the emperor riding on a horse. The monument represents the victorious ruler, who successfully restrains the Persians in the East. The historiographer Procopius remarks in his description of the monument: "And he looks toward the rising sun, directing his course, I suppose, against the Persians. And in his left hand he holds a globe, by which the sculptor signifies that the whole earth and sea are subject to him, yet he has neither sword nor spear nor any other weapon, but a cross stands upon the globe which he carries, the emblem by which alone he has obtained both his Empire and his victory in war. And stretching forth his right hand toward the rising sun and spreading out his fingers, he commands the barbarians in that quarter to remain at home and to advance nor further."[61] The presence of the enemy is imaginary in this setting. The statue of Justinian formed a reused bronze horse of Theodosius according to an illustration in a manuscript from Budapest (preserving an inscription); the monument vanished in the 15th century.[62]

Another record of a triumphal monument contains the Anthologia Planudea.[63] According to a poem, Justinian celebrated his victory over Bulgars and Persians in the Constantinopolitan hippodrome. The prefect of the city and the Praetorian prefect presented an equestrian statue to the *augustus*. The riding emperor practices the ritual of *calcatio*, the ancient gesture of total victory and humiliation of a defeated enemy, and Persians and Bulgarians are in

59 Konrad, "Beobachtungen zur Architektur"; Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon*, pp. 250-53 (the base of the column is visible, although it suffered from fire, ill. No. 285)

60 Bardill, "The Golden Gate in Constantinople".

61 Procopius, *De aedificiis*, ed. Wirth/Haury, I 2, 10-12; Downey 1961, pp. 35-7.

62 Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon*, pp. 248-49 (ill. Nr. 282); Magdalino/Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art", p. 155.

63 Anthologia Graeca vol. XVI Nrr 62 and 63 (ed. Beckby).

chains and pressed down.[64] This action is rarely depicted, but in the illuminated Skylitzes Matritensis emperor Michael II (820-829) is seen sitting on his throne setting his foot on the neck of the usurper Thomas the Rebel, who is prostrating before the emperor.[65]

The so-called Barberini ivory (Paris, Louvre inv. OA 9063) represents a mounted emperor wearing military dress (see image 4). At the horse's feet a personification of Earth can be seen, and on the left side of the emperor a Victoria is offering a wreath. Below the emperor barbarians and Indians are offering the victorious emperor goods. The ivory most likely depicts Justinian I.[66] After the reign of Justinian no archaeological records of triumphal columns or gates can be found. The Roman habit of erecting statues, columns and triumphal gates vanished in the 6th century. However, triumphal processions continued to be performed in the following centuries.[67] Written sources provide some hints on mosaics and murals depicting the victorious appearance of the emperor entering the city through the Golden Gate (see below).

Religious iconography adds a little to the perception of enemies: Military saints played an important role in liturgical service and veneration. Saints were fighting against the evil (symbolized by snails or dragons) and enemies of Christendom.[68] Theodoros Teron[69] or Demetrios of Thessalonica belong to the most famous and oldest saints that are connected to military actions.[70] Their iconography imitates depictions of mounted emperors crushing down the beaten opponent.

Illuminated manuscripts amplify our visual knowledge about enemies of the Byzantine Empire; in many cases these illuminations represent retrospective images, since they were produced long after the historical events that they described. A main source is the aforementioned Skylitzes Matritensis: the history of John Skylitzes was furnished with illuminations in a monastery in Siciliy

64 Dölger, "Der Fußtritt des Siegers"; Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee,* p. 183 (mentions the depiction of Constantine and his sons fighting against a dragon); McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 57-8, 71-3, 75-6, 144, 160; Croke, "Poetry and Propaganda".

65 See Tsamakda, *The Illustrated Chronicle*, pp. 296-97, fol. 375 (ill. 77).

66 Sodini, "Images sculptées et propagande impériale", pp. 84-6; Croke, "Poetry and Propaganda", p. 451; Walker, *The Emperor and the World*, pp. 8-9 (with ill.).

67 Overviews given by MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony* (especially section I. Adventus, pp. 17-89) and Mango, "The Triumphal Way".

68 See Walter, *Military Saints*; Grotowski, *Arms and Armour*.

69 Walter *Military Saints*, pp. 44-66.

70 Ibid., pp. 67-93; p. 129: a mural in Panagia at Moutoullas in Cyprus (dated 1280) shows St. George spearing a woman lying on the ground and wearing a crown; p. 130: St Demetrios spearing Kalojan (post-Byzantine 18th century).

in the middle of the 12th century. The manuscript seems to be a copy of a Constantinopolitan codex. Representations of foreign rulers and triumphal scenes can be found in various contexts.[71] The Normans were enemies of Byzantium but Norman kings held Byzantine culture in high esteem and brought many objects and ideas from their Eastern adversaries to Southern Italy. A rare example of foreign rulers' pictorial propaganda can be found in the mosaic programme of the Martorana (Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio) at Palermo: Roger II (1130-1154) is crowned by Christ in an imitation of Byzantine imperial iconography. Above the coronation scene a Greek inscription is inserted (ΡΟΓΕΡΙΟC ΡΗΞ, "king Roger").

Another important instrument for spreading imperial propaganda is coinage. Although Late Roman coins depict barbarians and defeated foreign rulers in many ways and types,[72] Byzantine mints (after the reign of Anastasius I, 491-518) do not provide any illustrations of humiliated enemies. The die cutters put more emphasis on symbols of victory and success. Coins and seals of Justinian still include statues of Nike/Victoria, that were later changed to angels.[73] After a period of omission, Nike/Victoria re-appeared during the reigns of Mauricius (582-602) and Phokas (602-610); Heraclius (610-641) used this motif for the last time in order to celebrate his victory over the Persians in 628. But military imagery did not vanish: military saints (St George) and armoured emperors (e.g. Isaakios I Komnenos)[74] still appeared on coins. However, the subjugated and defeated enemy lacked these depictions.

From the 5th century several portraits of barbaric rulers are preserved.[75] They imitate patterns of representatives of Roman power, but they intend to display their barbarian identity as well. It goes without saying that these artefacts, especially coins, circulated on Roman/Byzantine soil. The following rulers have been investigated recently: Gunthamund, Vandalic king (silver coin)[76] and Theoderic[77] (the famous mosaic in San Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna was possibly a portrait of Theoderic later re-modelled to represent Justinian).[78] Athalaric and Amalasuntha (Amalaswintha in Gothic) are carved

71 Tsamakda, *The Illustrated Chronicle*, pp. 293-303, pp. 305-6.

72 Levi, *Barbarians on Roman Imperial Coins and Sculpture*.

73 Stepanova, "Victoria – Nike on Early Byzantine Seals", p. 17.

74 Walker, *The Emperor and the World*, p. 6 (with ill.).

75 Rummel, *Habitus barbarus*, pp. 256-68 (chapter 6.7 "Bildliche Darstellungen von Barbarenherrschern").

76 Ibid., p. 257, ill. 26.

77 Ibid., p. 259, ill. 27.

78 Ibid., p. 263, ill. 28.

on the Orestes-ivory diptychon,[79] and the portrait of the Merovingian king Childeric is engraved on a sealing ring.[80]

3.2 *Images of Enemies Portrayed in Written Sources*

Evidence can also be found in written sources (from historiography to rhetoric). Military expeditions against peoples situated along the borders of the empire represented an essential part of Byzantine historiographical accounts and was a usual theme of court orators. But written sources provide descriptions of monumental art including imperial imagery as well.

The imperial palaces were decorated with various images narrating the deeds of emperors.[81] Prokopios of Kaisareia mentions in his "Buildings" imperial depictions there: "… and the Emperor Justinian is winning victories through his General Belisarius, and the General is returning to the Emperor, with his whole army intact, and he gives him spoils, both kings and kingdoms and all things that are most prized among men. In the centre stand the Emperor and the Empress Theodora, both seeming to rejoice and to celebrate victories over both the King of the Vandals and the King of the Goths, who approach them as prisoners of war to be led into bondage".[82]

The emperor Manuel renovated a *triklinos* (a banqueting hall), that was transformed into a monastic refectory. The Comnenian clan was visually present, as was reported in the the opening part of a poem: "Alexios Komnenos, the killer of Persians (*persoktonos*), established a communal life for them, giving every necessity in abundance; John, the purple-born son, the killer of Scythians and Persians, unceasingly poured out benefactions in uncountable ways; and their offspring, Emperor Manuel, born in purple, whose name alone terrifies the Paionian, the Italian, the Dalmatian, the Persian, the Scythian, and whom the four parts of the Earth have as their lord, multiplies the gifts pouring forth gifts to the monks, providing the ever-gushing-forth".[83]

Epigrams and poems on mosaics or murals echoed and explained depicted scenes and portraits.[84] The verses of Nikolaos Kallikles inform us about the decoration of the golden chamber in the palace: Alexios I (1081-1118) was depicted as triumphant over Normans, Pechenegs and Turks.[85] Reflexions of

79 Ibid., pp. 264-65, ill. 29, 30.

80 Ibid., p. 266, ill. 31.

81 See Magdalino/Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art".

82 Procopius, *De aedificiis*, ed. Wirth/Haury, I 10, 16-17; Dewing, *Buildings*, p. 87; Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee*, p. 183; see Croke. "Poetry and Propaganda", p. 451.

83 Spingou, *Words and Artworks*, p. 136 (Nr. 114).

84 A first attempt to collect material is Magdalino/Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art".

85 Magdalino/Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art", pp. 126-28.

otherness and enmity can be found both in epic poems (e.g. Digenis Akrites) and in the romances of the Comnenian period, where barbarians belonged to the setting of mythological landscapes.[86] Images of the victorious emperor were present in aristocratic buildings as well. Several examples of inscriptions underlining painted images are preserved in the Venetian manuscript Marcianus Graecus 524. It becomes apparent that in some cases the victorious/triumphant emperor was depicted in the context of the house owner.

It goes without saying that written sources reflect Byzantine notions on enemies and otherness at various levels. They store both eye-witness accounts (e.g. Prokopios of Caesarea, John Kameniates, Niketas Choniates) and (rhetorical) imaginings of enemies (e.g. Eustathios of Thessalonike). Byzantine historiographers intended to use models of depicting events by imitating ancient archetypes and stereotypes, but sometimes we are able to grasp glimpses of otherness.[87] Byzantine historiographers insert various ethnographic digressions.

Classical examples of the reception of ancient historiography are provided by Procopius of Caesarea in the 6th and Laonikos Chalkokondyles in the 15th century.[88] Procopius describes the Persians (Sassanids), enemies of the Roman Empire, but uses common and well-known motifs.[89] Rarely, additional information about contemporary habits can be found: Procopius criticizes the custom of not burying dead bodies, but instead feeding the corpses to wild animals.[90] Chalkokondyles offers a detailed description of the Ottomans emphasizing their origins, their habits and their culture.[91] After a geographical description of the territory settled by the Franks, Agathias, writing in the second half of the 6th century, provides some remarks on their habits and culture:

> ... for the Franks are not nomads, as indeed some barbarian people are, but their system of government, administration and laws are modelled more or less on the Roman pattern, apart from which they uphold similar standards with regard to contracts, marriage and religious observance.

86 Jouanno, "Les barbares dans le roman byzantine".

87 The authoritative collection of references to foreign peoples in Byzantine sources remains Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica* I-II. On foreign names in epigrams of the 12th century, Spingou, *Words and Artworks*, pp. 218-219. For a precise overview of the historiography see Papaioannou, "Byzantine Historia".

88 Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*; Markopoulos, "Das Bild des Anderen bei *Laonikos* Chalkokondyles"; Kaldellis, *A New Herodotus*.

89 Börm, *Prokop und die Perser*, pp. 254-57 ("Tradition und Barbarentopik").

90 Prokopios, *De Bellis*, I 12,4, ed. G. Wirth/J. Haury, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia*, vols. 1-2, Leipzig 1962-1963; Börm *Prokop und die Perser*, pp. 247-49.

91 Angelov, "Notions of 'Barbarians'".

> They are in fact all Christians and adhere to the strictest orthodoxy. They also have magistrates in their cities and priests and celebrate the feasts in the same way we do, and, for a barbarian people, strike me as extremely well-bred and civilised and as practically the same as ourselves except for their uncouth style and peculiar language.[92]

Of course, the Christian historiography also dealt with barbarian otherness, e.g. Sozomenus.[93]

The writings of Constantine VII provide a rich source of information on foreigners and enemies of the Empire. *De administrando imperio* was compiled between 948 and 952 and was addressed to Romanus, son of Constantine. The work can be divided into four sections: 1) foreign politics 2) instructions on diplomatic practices, 3) a survey of tribes and nations surrounding the Byzantine Empire and 4) the internal organisation of the Byzantine Empire.[94] In addressing foreign peoples and enemies, Byzantine writers followed anachronistic patterns, since they used ancient names to refer to contemporary peoples. It was common to speak about Celts, Ethiopians, Paeonians, Persians or Scythians. The Turks were named Persians, the Normans Franks, the French Germans. Scythian was a multifunctional denomination: It could stand for Bulgars, Pechenegs or Rus.[95] The decoding of names is sometimes puzzling, because authors adopted new terms.

A certain xenophobia becomes apparent in the so-called *Strategikon* of the retired military Kekaumenos (11th century) who mentions *barbaroi* in various occasions.[96] Another characteristic example of such a perception can be found in a letter by John Tzetzes (12th century), addressed to Leo, the metropolitan of Dristra. Leo had sent a young man from the Danube region to the capital and Tzetzes wrote to him: "You have sent us the ex-Vsevolod, now Theodore, a loss, no gain. For, firstly, on account of his tender years, although I need him to serve me, I am his slave rather than he is mine. Secondly, being scarcely able to feed one slave, now I take on this second one and foster him, and as I do not have abundant means for a living, I sell the things which I need most for their sake. Third, being ignorant of my language – for I do not know how to go barbarian

92 Agathias, *Historiae*, I 2, 3-4, ed. R. Keydell, *Agathiae Myrinaei historiarum libri quinque* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 2), Berlin 1967; Agathias, *The histories,* transl. with an introduction and short explanatory notes by J.D. Frendo, Berlin/New York 1975, p. 10.

93 Stevenson, "Sozomen".

94 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravscik, p. 11.

95 Tăpkova-Zaimova, "Quelques remarques sur les noms ethniques". See Cresci, "Michele Attaliata", pp. 201-203 (on Pechenegs and Turks).

96 See Roueché, "Defining the Foreign".

– he makes a fuss and laughs at me. Fourth, he is not Russian but Mysian by race …"[97] The slave trade was still common in 12th-century Byzantium, e.g. from Kievan Russia.[98] Mysian means Hungarian, because Tzetzes explains in his commentaries that Hungary and Hungarians were designated as "Mysia, Mysians".[99] And again barbarism is connected to the language of the other.

Rhetoric and poetry offers various insights into Byzantine imperial imagery, although both genres often reproduce stereotypes and generalisations with minor variations.[100] Orations were performed at court or in public. The Epiphany Oration of Eustathios of Thessalonica (1176), for example, includes many glimpses on the perceptions of foreign rulers.[101]

4 Performing Triumph – Displaying the Other

Triumphs had formed an essential element of imperial propaganda since the Hellenistic period. The Romans masterfully organized and performed their victories and even designed their urban landscapes for such events.[102] Triumphs (*thriamboi*) in Byzantium were quite different from the Roman *triumphus*, because in Rome such events were connected to *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus* and the triumphal procession arrived at his temple.[103]

It has to be highlighted that the Christian Church incorporated elements of triumphal depictions: positive images of victory appeared in an ecclesiastical environment. Christ functions as victor, and scenes connected to images of victors in the Old Testament were composed as well. The restoration of the orthodox faith after the end of Iconoclasm is explicitly called "Triumph of Orthodoxy".

An essential role was played the presentation of captives, defeated enemies and the triumphal carriage: the Roman (and then Byzantine) audience got an impression of the powerful Roman/Byzantine imperial army and a glimpse of foreign regions. A famous example of triumph is provided by Procopius: Belisar

97 John Tzetzes, *Letters*, 80, ed. P.A.M. Leone, *Ioannis Tzetzae epistulae*, Leipzig 1972; translation by Shepard, "Tzetzes' Letters to Leo", p. 197.

98 Also coloured people, see Karpozelos, "He these ton mauron".

99 Shepard, "Tzetzes' Letters to Leo", pp. 221-28; idem, "Byzantine Writers on the Hungarians".

100 Hörandner, "Das Bild des Anderen", p. 168.

101 Stone, *Secular Orations*, pp. 67-130, esp. 79-82.

102 Versnel, *Triumphus*. Östenberg, *Staging the World*, esp. pp. 128-67 (prisoners and hostages); Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee,* pp. 172-78.

103 Künzl, *Der römische Triumph*, p. 134.

and the defeated Vandal king Gelimer (530-534) appeared in the hippodrome of Constantinople paying homage to Justinian.[104] Triumphal processions are recorded up to the 12th century. In 971 John I successfully operated against the Kievan Rus and returned to Constantinople, where he performed his *adventus*.[105] This moment is depicted in the illuminations of Skylitzes Matritensis, where the emperor is shown on a white horse behind a carriage carrying an icon of the Theotokos *glykophilousa* and is followed by the Bulgarian tsar Boris II.[106] Basil II performed a triumphal entry into Constantinople in 1019 accompanied by male Bulgarian captives and female members of the tsar's household (Maria and daughters of the late Samuel). The famous depiction of Basil, who stands in battle dress imitating a Roman general, has to be dated earlier (around 1000). The eight men performing *proskynēsis* in front of the emperor, who does not wear a tiara or *toupha*[107] as typical signs of a victorious ruler, are not barbarians and cannot be connected to Basil's Bulgarian wars. It seems that the emperor is being compared with King David.[108] John II Komnenos and Manuel I used Tzimiskes' *adventus* as a model.[109] Manuel I performed several triumphs.[110] He celebrated his defeat of the Hungarians in 1167. Andronikos Kontostephanos, who was the responsible general, guided the victorious military units, "nor was the triumph lacking in troops of captives" (without further specification).[111] After the reconquest of Constantinople by Michael VIII in 1261 one finds no more information on triumphs.

Triumphs are depicted on various media, such as monumental columns and triumphal apses which marked the landscape of late antique towns (e.g. Rome, Thessalonike or Constantinople). Trajan's column is the most famous surviving

104 Börm, "Justinians Triumph und Belisars Erniedrigung"; Börm argues that Belisar is on the same level as Gelimer.

105 Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee,* pp. 146-47; Hunger, "Reditus imperatoris".

106 Grabar/Manoussakas, *L'illustration du manuscrit de Skylitzès,* p. 95, nr. 443 pl. XXXIV, Tsamakda, *The Illustrated Chronicle*, 211, Nr. 443 and Ill. 433 (fol. 172v), interprets the rider behind the emperor as a cleric, signifying the patriarch; Prinzing, "Nochmals zur historischen Deutung", p. 125.

107 A tuft of hair from exotic animals used to decorate helmets or crowns.

108 Stephenson, "Images of the Bulgar-Slayer", pp. 45-57.

109 See the analysis of triumphs in 12th century Byzantium, especially of Manuel I in Antiocheia (1159), in Anca, *Herrschaftliche Repräsentation*, pp. 19-51. Anca discusses the terms "triumph" and "ceremonial entry".

110 Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel*, pp. 240-43, on Emperor Manuel's triumphs in 1146, 1149, 1151-2, 1159, 1167, and 1172.

111 Niketas Choniates describes the triumph and the adorned city *in extenso*, see Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, pp. 157-58; Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium,* pp. 89-90.

example, and was imitated and copied in various ways. It stood as a model for the almost totally ruined column of Arcadius in Constantinople (see above). The apse of Galerius situated at the main street of Thessalonike was visible during the whole Byzantine period. The monument celebrating the emperor's deeds in the East (in Armenia and in Sassanid Persia) can be dated before 305. A cameo of the emperor Licinius (308-324) depicts the victorious ruler in a quadriga overruling kneeling barbarians (Paris Bibliothèque Nationale).[112]

Another medium of spreading imperial propaganda was silk weavings. A few examples of triumphant emperors can be found. This imagery on Byzantine silks is often combined with scenes from the hippodrome (e.g. in a piece in the *Domschatz* of Aachen[113] from the shrine of Charlemagne, the chariots are pulled by four horses, and below the chariot two small figures pour out coins). An often discussed artefact is the so-called *Gunthertuch*, a silk tapestry depicting a triumphant emperor between two celebrating female figures.[114] As has been recently argued, the emperor figure depicts John I Tzimiskes and not Basil II.[115]

Written sources must be added to get a notion of the organisation of such public events. Constantine VII mentions various *adventus* of emperors after their successful military operations. Theophilos had campaigned in the eastern region of Asia Minor and happily returned to the capital, where his triumphal entry was prepared by the eparch of the imperial city. Constantine reports: "On the same day, those bringing the prisoners arrived at Chrysopolis; and embarking them in ships, brought them across to where the emperor was waiting. … The soldiers of the different units took their own prisoners separately and in order, along with the booty and weapons, and proceeded triumphally (*ethriambeusen*) through the City."[116] In addition, orations addressed to victorious emperors allow the reconstruction of the setting of triumphs. Theodore Prodromos composed various pieces for John II Komnenos' successes against the Persians.[117] Manuel I celebrated several victories against Normans, Serbs and Hungarians, which were praised by court orations.[118]

112 Künzl, *Der römische Triumph*, p. 133.

113 Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving,* p. 173 M29 (ill. 23A).

114 Gunther of Bamberg purchased it during his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1064/65; Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 52B and 53A.

115 Prinzing, "Das Bamberger Gunthertuch"; Stephenson, *Legend of Basil*, pp. 62-65; Prinzing, "Nochmals zur historischen Deutung".

116 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Three Treatises*, pp. 147-49, C 829-836.

117 Hörandner, *Historische Gedichte*, Nr. XI (1139), Nr. XII (returning from Cilicia in 1139).

118 Ibid., Nr. 30 (1149).

Triumphal titles for emperors faded away as well:[119] Justinian was adorned with the epithet *Vandalicus* after his general's victory in North Africa (533) and Heraclius was the last ruler to add *Gepidicus*, *Hercullius* or *Gothicus* to his name. After 629 these elements never re-appeared.[120] However, Byzantine emperors continued to be called *aei nikōn* (eternal victor)*, aēttētos* (invincible) or *tropaiouchos* (trophy-bearer).[121] Usurpers were also treated as enemies of the emperor, as is testified in several recorded processions of disgrace.[122]

5 Portrayed Images of Enemies Both in Pictorial and Written Sources

The Arabic tribes can be divided into four groups in the late Roman/early Byzantine period. Similar to the western and northern borders of the empire they were given the status of *foederati* on both sides of the limes; Arabs living in the diocese of the Orient were called *cives*; the nomads in the deserts of the Arabic peninsula; and the city-dwellers of northern Arabia. In the 7th century a fundamental religious change emerged that led to an expansion of Arabic tribes. Motivated by Mohammed's religious teachings they moved to the North. Effective and well-trained armies conquered many Byzantine provinces and towns. The image of Arabic barbarians changed, because they were neither pagan nor strictly nomadic, both characteristics of uncivilised tribes. Almost nothing stopped their way to the West, and even Constantinople suffered two sieges. The 8th and 9th centuries faced an intensive religious discourse on veneration and the depiction of holy figures (and God) in the orthodox world. Views changed and even the attitudes towards the Abbasid caliphate turned into recognition. The patriarch Nicholas Mystikos wrote to the emir of Crete in 908: "there are two lordships, that of the Saracens and that of the Romans, which stand above all lordship on earth, and shine out like the two mighty beacons in the firmament. They ought, for this very reason alone, to be in contact and brotherhood and not, because we differ in our lives and habits and religion, remain alien in all ways to each other".[123] In the 11th and especially the 12th centuries the balance of superpowers changed, since other dominions

119 For an overview, see Rösch, *ONOMA ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ*, pp. 54-61.

120 Ibid., p. 59.

121 Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee,* p. 182.

122 Heher, *In den Schuhen des Kaisers*.

123 Nicholas Mystikos, *Letters*, ed. J.R.H. Jenkins/L.G. Westerink, *Nicholas I Patriarch of Constantinople. Letters* (CFHB, 6), Washington, D.C. 1973, epist. 1, 1-21.

emerged in the west. Images of Arabs are sparse: pre-Islamic Arabs can be found in manuscripts,[124] and the Skylitzes Matritensis adds several illuminations depicting Arab rulers. The main characteristic is their turban.[125]

Michael Psellos gives a description of the Pechenegs, who arrived at the borders of Byzantine-dominated territory during the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos (1142-1155) in the late 1040s.[126] The Pechenegs were allowed to settle on Byzantine soil after they had been nominally baptized. Although they became members of the orthodox community they never turned into Romans, as John Mauropous had thought.[127] Psellos pictures them as primitive militaries lacking tactics and equipment.[128] He introduces this chapter in order to highlight the military qualities of Isaakios Komnenos (1057-1059). Other sources, John Mauropous and Michael Attaleiates, compare them to beasts that came from the barbaric Scythian territories, saying that they were similar to snakes that started moving again after the sun had warmed them up.[129] Even in the 12th century they endangered Byzantine territory: "In the fifth year of John's reign (i.e. 1123), the Patzinaks crossed the Istros and plundered Thrace, destroying everything under foot more absolutely than a host of locusts. John gathered the Roman forces, equipping them with the best arms possible, and marched against them, not only because of their great numbers, but also because of the arrogant behaviour and grating boastfulness of these barbarians, who, it appears, recalled their former accomplishments when during the reign of Alexios Komnenos they had occupied Thrace and laid waste most of Macedonia".[130] But the emperor succeeded: "John having achieved such a glorious victory over the Patzinaks, raised a huge trophy and offered prayers to God and, as a remembrance and thanksgiving for these deeds, established what we call the festival of the Patzinaks".[131] The victory went down in Byzantine history and became a regular feast that supported imperial propaganda and memory.

124 Christides, "Pre-Islamic Arabs".

125 Tsamakda, *The Illustrated Chronicle*, p. 364; Grabar/Manoussacas *L'illustration du manuscrit de Skylitzès,* nos. 98, 138, 189, 190, 192. A characteristic image on fol 47v Tsamakda, *The Illustrated Chronicle*, fig 107: Emperor Theophilos sends John Synkellos to Syria. He meets the emir of Syria, who is wearing a striped three-coloured tunica.

126 Kaldellis, *Ethnography after Antiquity*, p. 117.

127 Ibid., p. 125.

128 Ibid., p. 118-19.

129 Ibid., p. 122 (referring to Michael Attaleiates).

130 Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, pp. 13-14; Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium,* p. 10.

131 Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 16; Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium,* p. 11.

The Normans caused steady opposition to the Byzantine Empire, and after the conquest of Bari Norman troops reached the areas of the Southern Balkans and Greece several times (1081-1085, 1107-1108, 1147-1148 and 1185, the disastrous capture of Thessalonica).[132] Anna Komnene's Alexias offers much information on certain persons from the West, but the Normans as a group are not present. She normally describes the other in an adverse manner, but sometimes positive statements are detected (e.g. the portrait of Raymond of St Gilles).[133] Niketas Choniates and Eustathios of Thessalonica are the main sources for reconstructing the image of the Western conquerors.[134] Niketas provides a description of the Norman incursion after the Second Crusade (1147-1149): the Normans are mostly presented as a group without manners, despising Byzantine culture. A standard topic is their presentation as gluttonous sea animals: "Like those sea monsters who seek food on both land and sea, his army encamped in the land of Kadmos, and, plundering the towns along the way, he came to Thebes of the Seven Gates, which he took by storm, treating her inhabitants savagely".[135] Eustathios of Thessalonica writes in his Epiphany oration of 1176: "I will also not be silent about the things which we applauded in celebration at the time, that is about the great sea-monster, the new Typhon, concerning how he wanted to be shaken up from afar and to make a roaring noise, and come belching in a wave over our land".[136] Conquering Latins were rushing into churches, and climbed up the altars, danced there and sang barbarian songs from their homeland, and "afterwards, they uncovered their privy parts and let the membrum virile pour forth the contents of the bladder, urinating round about the sacred floor…".[137] And again they are characterized by their language: "Even if the Roman seized could speak the Italian language perfectly, he was nonetheless so far estranged from this alien race that not even his dress had anything in common with the Latins; it was as though he were detested by God, condemned to drink unmingled the Lord's cup of wrath and to take the cup unmixed".[138]

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132 Asdracha, "L'image de l'homme".

133 Lilie, "Anna Komnene und die Lateiner", p. 176.

134 On Choniates see also Baseu-Barabas, "Das Bild des Anderen" (especially on Bulgaria).

135 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 74, 77f.; Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium,* p. 44; see Stone, "Nautical and Marine Imagery".

136 Eustathios of Thessaloniki, Sermons, ed. P. Wirth, *Eustathii Thessalonicensis opera minora* (*magnam partem inedita*) (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 32), Berlin: 1999, pp. 211, line 17 – 212, Stone, *Secular Orations*, p. 103.

137 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 300; Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium,* p. 166.

138 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, pp. 300-301; Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium,* p. 166.

6 Embracing the Enemy or Appreciating the Exotic

Reading Byzantine sources provides evidence of preserving and appreciating exotic things and manners. In 10th-century Byzantium the Gothic game (*gotthikon*) still formed a part of the entertainment at the Byzantine court. A passage in *De ceremoniis*, initiated by Constantine VII runs as follows:

> On the ninth day of the twelve days of Christmas, when the rulers are seated at the supper … those who are going to play the Gothic game stand at the two entrances of the great Hall of the Nineteen Couches as follows. On the left side, where the *droungarios* of the fleet also stands in attendance, the instructor of the faction of the Blues stands along with a few *demesmen* and the *pandouri*-players with their *pandouris*, and behind him two Goths, wearing furs turned inside out and masks of various forms, and carrying shields in their left hand and staffs in their right. Likewise, too, on the right side, where the *droungarios* of the Watch also stands in attendance, the instructor of the faction of the Greens stands along with a few *demesmen* and the *pandouri*-players with their *pandouri*, and behind him two Goths, wearing furs turned inside out and masks of various forms, and carrying shields in their left hand and staffs in their right…[139]

In the following, the performers recite Gothic words and commands underlining the exotic setting acoustically. Constantine VII was also keen on objects that originated in the East. Theodore of Kyzikos sent a precious piece and the emperor showed his gratitude:

> I (scil. Constantine) admired the variegation of the Arabic cup, its smoothness, the fine work, while eating; I like the idea of pouring wine with this item, I enjoy it more than nectar abundantly flooding to my lips.[140]

The Byzantines' taste was not restricted to tiny precious items, they also esteemed architectural style from their eastern neighbours: Theophilos employed architects from Persia in order to build the so called palace of Bryas. In the 12th century the Muchrutas, a hall in the imperial palace, was

139 Constantine Pophyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, ed. A. Vogt, *Le livre des cérémonies*, vols. 2, Paris 1939, p. 182; Moffatt/Tall, *The Book of Ceremonies*, pp. 381-86.

140 Theodorus Cyzicenus, *Letters*, 5, 24-26, ed. M. Tziatzi-Papagianni, *Theodori Metropolitae Cyzici Epistulae. Accedunt epistulae mutuae Constantini Porphyrogeniti* (CFHB, 48), Berlin 2010, p. 91.

constructed by Seljuk builders. Nicholas Mesarites describes the exotic architecture and the interior of the hall:

> it bears figures of Persians and their various costumes. … He (John the Fat, the usurper) was gulping his drink quickly and courting favour with the Persians painted on the chamber and drinking to them.[141]

Even in aristocratic palaces exotic or unconventional imagery was visible. Alexios Axuch, an important general under Manuel I, decorated one of his houses with an extraordinary iconographic programme, as John Kinnamos reports:

> Returning some time later to Byzantion, when he wished to adorn one of his suburban dwellings with murals, he did not emblazon on them ancient Greek feats, nor did he set forth to the emperor's deeds, things which he has achieved in wars and beast hunts, such as is more often customary for those who hold governmental offices…[142] Neglecting these [subjects], Alexius (for I return to where I made the excursus from my narrative) commemorated the sultan's martial deeds, foolishly making public in painting in his residence what should have been concealed in darkness.[143]

Exotic dress is mentioned on various occasions. The general Eustathios Kamytzes (whose predecessors were Turks) fought in the army of Alexios I. After an imperial victory he rushed to the capital and arrived at the imperial palace, "when she (i.e. the empress) saw him dressed like a Turk (*tourkikōs*)". After a night's sleep "he rose early, mounted a horse (still dressed in the clothes in which he had arrived after his extraordinary deliverance from captivity) and rode to the Forum of Constantine. His appearance at once caused general excitement in the city".[144]

The usurper Andronikos Komnenos is characterized by his typical clothing that did not meet the expectations of an aristocrat or the outfit of an emperor.

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141 Asutay-Effenberger, "Muchrutas"; Walker, *The Emperor and the World*, pp. 144-64, pp. 175-76 (translation).

142 Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke, p. 266, 4-16; Brand, *Deeds of John and Manuel*, pp. 199-200; Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, pp. 224-25.

143 Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke, p. 267, 13-16: Brand, *Deeds of John and Manuel*, p. 200.

144 Anna Komnene, *Alexias,* XIV 6, 6, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, pp. 449, lines 57-60; Sewter/Frankopan, *The Alexiad*, p. 419.

Arriving at Constantinople he was "…wearing a violet-coloured garment of Iberian weave, open at the sides and reaching down to the knees and buttocks and covering the elbows; on his head he wore a greyish black headdress shaped like a pyramid".[145] Andronikos is presented as a foreigner. Not until his coronation did he change clothes, but then "removing his dark grey pyramidal headdress made of wool, one group put a red one on him, and another dressed him in an imperial robe".[146]

One episode reflects the presence and production of royal images: the Crusader Eric, king of Denmark, arrived at the walls of Constantinople in 1103. Alexios I was sceptical about inviting him into his palace, since he employed Varangians (including men from Denmark) in his palace guard who would probably pay more respect to the Danish king than to the emperor. At the beginning he allowed groups of his guard to visit Eric, who encamped outside Constantinople. But Alexios' suspicion was not substantiated and Eric was welcomed into the imperial palace. There, the emperor ordered a painting of his highly appreciated guest to be made. Images of the sitting and the standing king were to be produced (*stantisque et sedentis habitum quam diligentissime coloribus complecteretur*).[147]

In 1172 Manuel I and Stefan Nemanja, *župan* of Serbia, returned to Constantinople. The Serbian ruler gazed at depictions of imperial successes. He saw himself depicted urging the Serbs to secede from Byzantium. Nemanja vituperates the artist, because he did not present him as a servant (of the Byzantine emperor) (*doulos*):

> I would also not be silent here about Nemanja, who on another occasion furnished glowing words for me when he was out of sight, whereas not long ago the sight of him left me dumbfounded … <Eustathios mentions the paintings> … and on seeing these things which had been depicted, he nods at all and agrees with everything that is shown. In one respect alone does he find fault with the artist, in that the latter did not call him a slave everywhere in the separate representations of the victories, nor was the name of slave inscribed everywhere as a form of address for Nemanja.[148]

145 Choniates, *Historia,* ed. van Dieten, p. 252, Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium,* p. 141.

146 Choniates*, Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 271, Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium,* p. 151.

147 Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, ed. J. Olrik/H. Raeder/F. Blatt, Copenhagen 1931, 12.7.3; Ciggaar, *Western Travellers,* pp. 111, 127-28; Vučetić, *Zusammenkünfte byzantinischer Kaiser mit fremden Herrschern*.

148 Stone, *Eustathios of Thessaloniki. Secular orations* p. 114; Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel*, p. 242.

Neither a portrait of Eric nor of Nemanja is preserved, but the two passages clearly indicate the presence of enemies' and allies' portraits in the capital.

After the end of the Byzantine Empire everything was turned upside down: Georgios Amirutzes wrote a poem between 1462-1467 that was dedicated to sultan Mehmet, the new ruler of the former Byzantine Empire. The verses applied typical elements of Byzantine imperial panegyric to the conqueror of the Empire: he is compared to Helios and addressed as ruler of the Romans and king of the Hellenes. A careful reader notes that any connotation of the usual (Christian) divine sphere is lacking. Constantinople could be depicted as an old lady with a shrivelled face who performed *proskynesis* before the sultan. Alternatively, she could turn into a young girl who celebrated and enjoyed her new master as the legitimate successor of the Byzantine emperor.[149] The conqueror of the empire had even absorbed the very features of Byzantine *Kaisertum*.

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CHAPTER 5

Warfare as Literary Narrative

Stamatina McGrath

The story of Byzantium is a story of warfare against its many external and internal enemies and it is unsurprising that descriptions of war abound in every type of literary genre and from every period of Byzantine history. While discussion of the various aspects of warfare has engaged the attention of scholars for some time, producing extensive studies from the examination of the ideology of war and peace to the study of military technology and tactics, recent scholarship has also focused attention on the battle narrative as a means of examining the battlefield experience and its literary impact.[1] The present essay argues that the battle description, the essential element in the warfare narrative, served as a bridge between the values of a warrior culture and a Christian society by highlighting heroic conduct, shaping and elevating the role of divine providence in the outcome of battle, and connecting a broad audience to a common cultural experience. In a literary sense the battle story served a double function as an augment to a larger piece of literature adding memorable dramatic qualities and as an opportunity for the author to comment on social, religious or political issues. Battle narratives were inserted in many forms of lit-

1 While the subject of warfare in Late Antiquity and Byzantium has been studied in detail, the discussion of the war narrative specifically has been considered in depth only recently. Rance, in his article "Narses and the Battle of Taginae", discussed the difficulty in creating a comprehensive narrative to relate accurately the battlefield experience in the Late Antique and Medieval worlds and pointed to the fact that historians were frequently not eyewitnesses, and that their accounts relied heavily on oral reports of individuals whose recollections of the events may have been incomplete, inaccurate, and biased. The secondary literature based on these accounts can sometimes propagate the "distortions" that can only be revealed with cross examination and careful study (Rance, "Narses and the Battle of Taginae", pp. 424-26). See also the works of Roueché, "Byzantine Writers and Readers", pp. 123-33; McGrath, "Battles of Dorostolon", pp. 152-64; Holmes, "The Rhetorical Structures of Skylitzes", pp. 187-99; Rood, "The Development of the War Monograph", pp. 147-58; Chlup, "Identity and the Representation of War in Ancient Rome", pp. 209-32; Whately, *Descriptions of Battle in the Wars of Procopius*; Colvin, "Reporting Battles and Understanding Campaigns in Procopius and Agathias: Classicising Historians' Use of Archived Documents as Sources", pp. 571-97; Sinclair, *War Writing in Middle Byzantine Historiography. Sources, Influences and Trends.* For the purposes of this essay I will consider the war narrative as a description of battles and heroic deeds associated with warfare contained within larger narratives of various literary genres.

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erature including hagiography, letters, rhetorical works, epic poetry, romances, and historical texts.[2] Examples from two genres, hagiography and history, will be considered here, while recognizing the possibilities for future studies in other literary fields. Among the questions that arise from the study of battle narratives are how these stories entered the written record and what they suggest regarding the connections between descriptions of warfare, storytelling and the formation of collective memory through the oral and written tradition in Byzantium.[3]

1 Introduction: From Oral Narrative to Written Document

Study of source documents behind many battle descriptions has illustrated the use of classical models in the construction of battle episodes in Byzantine historiography.[4] While tracing the written tradition to show the reworking of

2 The battle episode may be characterized simply as a narration or a description based on the terminology used in the text. See Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric,* p. 79, esp. n. 3 for a discussion regarding the distinction in meaning between *diegesis and diegema* (*διήγησις*/*διήγημα*), also Angelou, "Rhetoric and History", pp. 297-98 where the *diegema* is identified as a self-contained episodic narrative, whereas the *diegesis* is a larger account or story and Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 24-25. However, not all Byzantine authors adhered to these distinctions in meaning and frequently used the terms interchangeably.

3 Determining the form and extent of orality in Byzantine culture is a challenging task as the venues and forms of public readings or recitations are not clearly described in the sources. However, the fact that Byzantines did listen to readings remains incontrovertible. Among the scholarly works attempting to identify Byzantine "orality" in various contexts, see Papalexandrou, "The Memory Culture of Byzantium", pp. 108-22; especially in connection to poetry see Trypanis, "Byzantine Oral Poetry", pp. 1-3; Jeffreys, "The Oral Background of Byzantine Popular Poetry", pp. 504-47; Beaton, "Orality and the reception of late Byzantine vernacular literature", pp. 174-85; Mackridge, "The Metrical Structure of the Oral Decapentasyllable", pp. 200-12; Beaton, "Byzantine historiography and modern Greek oral poetry", pp. 41-60. For the discussion of orality in other literary genres see Agapitos, "Writing, reading and reciting (in) Byzantine erotic fiction", pp. 125-76; Croke, "Uncovering Byzantium's historiographical audience" pp. 25-53; Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*: pictorial narrative and the art of telling stories", pp. 145-65; Shawcross, "'Listen, all of you, both Franks and Romans': the narrator in the *Chronicle of Morea*", pp. 93-111; Mullett, "Rhetoric, theory and the imperative of performance: Byzantium and now", pp. 151-57; *eadem*, "Writing in Early Medieval Byzantium", pp. 159-60; Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, pp. 329, 335-36 and 408-09, and 426-30.

4 For recent scholarship see Whately, "War in Late Antiquity", pp. 101-51, Colvin, "Reporting Battles and Understanding Campaigns in Procopius and Agathias", pp. 571-97, Sinclair,

ancient literary prototypes is critical to our understanding of how Byzantines found their own expression through imitation, it is also necessary to consider that cultural memory may also have been interwoven within battle narratives. Separating oral memories from literary *mimesis* is difficult, but it would be erroneous to ignore the oral narrative traditions of the society in favour of its literary elements alone.[5] Many Byzantine battle narratives (and their visual representations) may well have had their origins in an oral context.[6] We are aware that in their oral forms some heroic battle episodes were incorporated into epic poetry and popular songs that enjoyed broad public appeal.[7] Most likely as a consequence of their extended oral dissemination some epic stories, like the epic of Digenis Akrites, existed in numerous versions. Even when such stories were recorded in written form some still retained significant linguistic markers as an inheritance from their oral past.[8] Beyond the genres of song,

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War Writing in Middle Byzantine Historiography, and more generally the collection of articles by Croke, *Christian Chronicles and Byzantine History, 5th-6th centuries*.

5 Papalexandrou, "The Memory Culture of Byzantium", pp. 115-16; Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I*, and more generally, p. 408; Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 12-15; Geary, "Oblivion Between Orality and Textuality in the Tenth Century", pp. 114-116; Van Dyke/Alcock, *Archaeologies of Memory*, and Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*.

6 Ian Colvin has made the argument that when Procopius and Agathias relate stories of soldiers' personal valour in battles for which they were not eyewitnesses, they rely heavily on battle reports or citations of bravery that were associated with the Roman practice of awarding military decorations for heroic action on the battlefield, see Colvin, "Reporting Battles and Understanding Campaigns in Procopius and Agathias", pp. 590-93. While he makes a strong case for the practice in Procopius and Agathias' works, the issue remains that many Byzantine historians would not have had access to these types of documents even if they were produced with regularity and stored in imperial archives, while the ubiquitous presence of battle narratives in the historiography demands that we revisit the idea of some form of oral dissemination. For a discussion of the transformation of oral/written campaign reports to art see Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I*, pp. 473-75.

7 For evidence of popular songs, *Theophanes Continuatus,* ed. Featherstone/Codoñer, pp. 106-08, Nikephoros Gregoras, *History*, eds. I. Bekker and L. Schopen, *Nicephori Gregorae historiae Byzantinae*, 3 vols. *Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae*. Bonn 1829-55, I, p. 377. An example of travelling bards singing songs of the deeds of famous men is discussed in Jeffreys, "The Oral Background of Byzantine Popular Poetry", p. 508 and Sifakis, "Looking for the Tracks of Oral Tradition", p. 83. For a discussion of the oral roots of Byzantine poetry, Jeffreys, "Medieval Greek Epic Poetry", pp. 459-84, and Roilos, "Oral Literature", pp. 225-52. More generally for the discussion of orality in societies, Ong, *Orality and Literacy,* especially, pp. 77-114, but for suggestion of new methodological approaches in the examination of Medieval culture, Hall, "The Orality of a Silent Age", pp. 270-90.

8 Beaton, "An Epic in the making?", p. 64. We can consider the six extant versions of the epic of Digenis Akrites as evidence of its popularity – for discussion and extensive bibliography

poetry, and romance, battle narratives might also enter the written record in the more sombre forms of history or chronicle. The obvious difficulty in studying oral tradition is that we can only locate it once it has been "textualised" within the written record and the methodological framework of this process is still in its infancy.[9] In their written literary incarnations the primary function of battle narratives is still to draw an emotional connection between the reading or listening audience and the events and their outcomes.

Insertion of battle narratives in historical texts offers a dramatic break in the narrative sequence allowing the audience a chance to pause and reflect. Placement of the battle story within the context of a larger historical text is parenthetical and explanatory in nature, meant to interpret causes or consequences within the greater historical narrative. Battle stories are for the most part brief, remarkable and frequently contain wonders and miracles meant to amaze the audience.[10] In most cases the moral of the story is clear and either deals with the ethics of human behaviour or divine economy, or both. Significantly, the battle story offers a humanizing element to the description of warfare by contextualizing the brutality of military engagement in such a way as to impart knowledge to the reader/audience and offer comfort in a providential design.[11]

Battle narratives told by eyewitnesses would have been a natural outcome of the experience of war and were in their purest forms oral communications. These stories might be preserved over time and retold in subsequent generations with changes and augmentations to fit the intentions of the story teller and, consequently, oral elements within battle narratives do not represent exact speech or summaries of events but rather oral or written cultural memories of the population that appropriated them in its collective history. In his history covering the 4th and 5th centuries Zosimus, one of the last pagan historians, retold a unique tale of bravery by Menelaus, a commander of mounted archers from Armenia that is notable for its epic qualities. During the battle of Mursa in southern Pannonia Magnentius was defeated by the forces of Constantius II in 352 CE. If we are to believe the historian, Menelaus' skill with the bow was such that he could shoot three arrows at a time, all striking

regarding this epic see, Beaton/Ricks, *Digenis Akrites: New Approaches to Byzantine Heroic* Poetry; Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis, the Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions.*

9 Papalexandrou, "The Memory Culture of Byzantium", pp. 108-110 and 114; Geary, "Oblivion Between Orality and Textuality in the Tenth Century", p. 114.

10 See the example of the Doukas story below.

11 For a study of the ideas of individual characters in connection to the divine plan in Choniates see Harris, "Distortion, divine providence and genre", pp. 19-31. See also Bourbouhakis/Nilsson, "Byzantine Narrative", pp. 263-74.

different targets. In the account, it was this extraordinary ability that led to the defeat of Magnentius' forces even though the heroic soldier was killed in the fight.[12] The author (or more accurately his source/s) notes that he should not pass in silence the stories about this warrior and the parenthetical episode is introduced by the statement "they say" (*φασί*).[13] The account allows for the idea of orality in its transmission, perhaps a vestige of the original author's method of acquiring the story. While the language indicates a verbal communication, the plural of the verb suggests that the story may have been told by more than one person.[14] In Skylitzes' account of the battle of Dorostolon in 971, he narrates a similar story of bravery performed by the hero Anemas, the son of a Cretan Emir, who fought courageously against the Rus.[15] After a bold attack in which Anemas nearly killed the Rus leader Svjatoslav, he succumbed to the onslaught of Rus warriors, but only after killing a large number of them according to the narrative. Stories such as these whether written by the author or retold in several renditions were significant to the audience because they related to social memories (oral or written) and cultural values which the society identified as its own.

Battle stories would be subject to at least two types of "editing"; the primary "editing" by the storyteller who had to be speaking after the fact, sometimes many years after the conclusion of a battle. Such recollections would be subject to memory distortions and historical perspectives that may have included the military, political and personal consequences of an engagement. Official battle records might have served as the first written depositories of heroic reports for the purpose of awarding imperial favours to brave soldiers and punishing cowards, but their nature is unclear as are questions on whether they

12 *Ἄξιον δὲ τὰ περὶ Μενελάου λεγόμενα μὴ παραδραμεῖν σιωπῇ· τοῦτόν φασι τρία κατὰ ταὐτὸν ἐναρμόζοντα τῷ τόξῳ βέλη, καὶ χρώμενον ἀφέσει μιᾷ, μὴ καθ' ἑνὸς σώματος ἀλλὰ τριῶν ἐμπηγνύναι τὰ βέλη, τούτῳ δὲ τῷ τρόπῳ τῆς τοξείας χρησάμενον πλῆθος μὲν οὐκ ὀλίγον κατατοξεῦσαι τῶν πολεμίων, αἴτιόν τε ὡς εἰπεῖν γενέσθαι τῆς τῶν ἐναντίων φυγῆς*, Zosimus, *Historia nova*, ed. F. Paschoud, *Zosime. Histoire nouvelle*, vols. 1-3.2, Paris 1971-89, p. 52, lines 1-2. See also Woods, "Arbazacius, Flavitta, and the Government of Isauria CA AD 396-404", p. 113.

13 For the view of this expression as a *topos* in the description of acts of heroism on the battlefield in Procopius and Agathias see Colvin, "Reporting Battles and Understanding Campaigns in Procopius and Agathias", p. 581.

14 For a discussion of Zosimus' historical models and his interest in relating marvellous stories see Scavone, "Zosimus and his Historical Models", pp. 57-67.

15 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, pp. 307-308; McGrath, "The Battles of Dorostolon", pp. 160-161 where the discrepancy between the battle description in Skylitzes and Leo the Deacon is considered further.

were archived, for how long, and who might have access to them.[16] Moreover, official battle records would be subject to the same problem of transmission and primary "editing" by eyewitnesses who also may have political interests and personal loyalties driving their accounts. The transition from oral storytelling or written battle report to written war narrative embedded within larger texts required a secondary process of "editing", a conscious process of selection, literary refinement, and revision shaping the story to fit the larger purposes of the written text.[17] This secondary "editing" reflected the literary sensibilities of the author and the audience for which the document was intended. That numerous battle narratives were included within histories is unsurprising considering the integral relationship between warfare and every other aspect of life in the Byzantine Empire. The fact that many authors chose to render these stories in language that implied oral transmission reflects the expectations of their audience and the weight of oral testimony for the authentication of the story, a reminder of the fact that oral expression in its many public forms (popular songs, poems, orations, or *ekphaseis*) was an integral part of the fabric of Byzantine culture.[18]

History writing like most other forms of literary expression was a gender specific activity pursued by educated men, with the singular exception in the 12th century of the *Alexiad* by Anna Komnene. Authors might be members of the clergy or the imperial administration but all represented the privileged in Byzantine society. Their education was the product of a tradition that included classical training in grammar and rhetoric and familiarity with the works of notable authors from the classical Greek world and Roman antiquity.[19] While

16 In a 10th-century military oration of emperor Constantine VII we find mention of written battle records to be presented to the emperor by his royal observers: "…you will keep written records, so that when you come here you may tell us, in order that we will look with favour upon the men and deem them worthy of our praises and rewards", McGeer, "Two Military Orations", p. 120. On the importance of inciting soldiers to battle with the promise of awards for bravery see *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, pp. 250-66 and cf. 468-73. The verbal acclamation of war heroes by the leadership in a ritualistic context after a victory (for example a triumph, or procession) may well have been sufficient to entrench a heroic figure or battle episode in public memory and initiate an oral tradition.

17 The tradition of history-writing inherited from the classical world beginning with Thucydides was characterized by warfare and therefore a discussion of Byzantine works of history is a natural starting point for tracing the war narrative. See also Reinsch, "Byzantine Adaptations", pp. 755-78; Aerts, "Imitatio and aemulation in Byzantium", pp. 89-99.

18 Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 407-15.

19 Lemerle, *Le Premier Humanisme Byzantin*; Browning, and "Literacy in the Byzantine World", pp. 39-54.

historical works sought to emulate the great writers of the classical tradition their world view was informed by Christian theology.[20] Histories and chronicles sought to align events with the greater divine plan and the presence of God was felt in every historical moment. Working within this ideological landscape natural events were interpreted as portents of the future and historical actors played out their roles while teaching the readers and audience about morality, divine providence and the pre-eminence of the Byzantine state. The audience of written historical texts must be understood to be the higher echelons of society, those individuals who were literate enough to read the documents or sufficiently educated to understand them if they were read out loud.[21] Public readings of literary works took place, as far as we know, within the imperial palace or among small aristocratic circles in the capital and the provinces.[22]

The specific production process of historical works in Byzantium was not fixed and differed depending on author and chronological period.[23] Whether the author served also as scribe, or whether he or she had access to government records to verify the chronology and sequence of events, places, and names of historical actors varied from author to author with little indication left behind of the method.[24] Book production itself was an expensive proposition involving the acquisition of writing materials in the form of parchment, writing implements, ink and on rare occasions colours derived from mineral pigments and gold leaf (for luxury productions), as well as labour in the form of a scribe or copyist, calligrapher or illuminator.[25] These considerations should make it

20 Croke, *Christian Chronicles and Byzantine History*; Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World*, pp. 13-33 and 234-80.

21 Browning, "Literacy in the Byzantine world", pp. 39-54; idem, "The language of Byzantine Literature", pp. 103-04; Roueché, "The Rhetoric of Kekaumenos", pp. 28- 33.

22 While it is tempting to consider the possibility of public recitations of epic stories intended for broad audiences along the lines of the Near Eastern tradition of the urban storyteller (*hakawati*) I am not aware of any references to such an institution in Byzantium. On the institution see Ott, "From the Coffeehouse into the Manuscript: The Storyteller and His Audience in the Manuscripts of an Arabic Epic", pp. 443-51.

23 Wilson, "Books and Readers in Byzantium", pp. 1-15; Mango, "The Availability of Books in the Byzantine Empire, AD 750-850", pp. 29-45; Mokretsova et al., *Materials and Techniques of Byzantine Manuscripts*.

24 For a discussion of Byzantine historians and their sources with bibliography see Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians.*

25 Wilson, "Books and Readers", p. 3, indicates that in the 9th century the price of parchment for the production of a book of approximately 400 folios cost an average of 18 *nomismata.* See also, Mango, "Availability of Books in the Byzantine Empire", pp. 38-39; Lowden, "Book Production", pp. 462-72.

clear that the act of composing history should be understood as a deliberate, political act with the intent of influencing how the past would inform the present and future concerns of the authors, their patrons, and their worlds. Such an impact would be limited if the physical book enjoyed restricted circulation to a few individuals and did not enjoy some form of extended audience.[26]

What we might term the "publication" process of histories is also unclear. If written at the specific request (or with the funding) of a patron, we might expect a work of history to be found in a private collection or imperial library. However, the fame and concrete benefits that were sought after by historians, and the moral lessons and cultural connections put forward in their works would not be achieved without access to broader audiences.[27] Histories and chronicles formed the core of secular literary production and comprised the bulk of overall book production second only to theological texts and saints' lives. Byzantine historians were keenly aware of participating in a long historiographic tradition as is illustrated by their efforts to connect their works to those of their predecessors by picking up their histories where previous historians had ended or borrowing extensively both the content and style from the works of respected classical historians.[28] The fact that Byzantine historians borrowed or reworked descriptions, imagery and language from past works to form their histories in general and their battle descriptions specifically makes the work of dissecting and identifying the parts of the battle narrative challenging. At the same time, we must entertain the idea that while using old models enhanced the authority of their works forming a sort of system of reference and authority (similar to our notion of footnotes and bibliography) easily recognizable by their educated contemporary audiences, historians in Byzantium might also aspire to have their works understood by those who were less educated than themselves. The universal appeal of the battle narrative cannot be confined to a literary ornament from an ancient past. It was relevant to the various audiences not because it was classicizing, but because by its use of specific (and

26 Scott, "From propaganda to history to literature: the Byzantine stories of Theodosius' apple and Marcian's eagles", pp. 115-32; Shawcross, "'Listen, all of you, both Franks and Romans': the narrator of the *Chronicle of Morea*", pp. 93-114; Papalexandrou, "The Memory Culture of Byzantium", pp. 109-22.

27 Choniates' intention of appealing to a broad audience is discussed in Croke, "Uncovering Byzantium's historiographical Audience", pp. 26-27 and van Dieten, "Bemerkungen zur Sprache der sogenannten vulgärgriechischen Niketasparaphrase", pp. 37-77. For the interpretation of Choniates' intention as a *topos*, Cupane, "*Δεῦτε, προσκαρτερήσατε μικρόν ...*", pp. 147-68.

28 Magdalino, "Byzantine Historical Writing", pp. 218-233; Macrides, *History as Literature in Byzantium*.

familiar) language and imagery it captured the imaginations of readers or listeners and brought them to the bloody action of the front line, where heroic actions and miracles were performed and divine will decided the day.[29]

The expense of book production and the wide disparity of levels of literacy even among the elite point to a written culture that depended heavily on oral performance as a means of disseminating its message.[30] Histories, like most literary documents including letters, rhetorical works, and hagiographical compositions, were meant to be read out loud before small groups of friends and associates, in the form of the *theatron*, at the homes of wealthy patrons, or within ecclesiastical or monastic settings.[31] Although we know little of the oral delivery of such texts the fact that most narratives would have to be presented in such a way in order to reach the majority of their audience requires us to consider seriously the orality of Byzantine society and understand it as an energetic and productive force. The episodic structure of many literary genres retains elements of their oral past and it is within the telling of parenthetical episodes, frequently battle stories or other miraculous tales, that we can see the author engaging with that broad audience that would have been naturally drawn to such popular stories for their entertainment value and spiritual messages. These stories were usually short in length, and many contained oral queues such as introductory statements suggesting speech ("they say", "it is said") or dialogue rendered in most cases in the vernacular or demotic language. They were commonly accompanied by moral lessons that would be appealing and memorable to the audience of erudite and the uneducated alike, reinforcing common cultural perceptions and religious bonds. Accurate reporting of historical events was of secondary importance. In public readings attended by individuals with varying degrees of education and literary sophistication the parenthetical episodes, many of them battle stories, would create instances of ideological unity and community memory not necessarily

29 The many questions associated with the function of the vernacular in literary texts have been highlighted by Hinterberger, "How should we define vernacular literature?".

30 The propagandistic nature of Byzantine histories would be lost without access to the society they were meant to influence. On the political nature of historical writing see Scott, "The Classical Tradition in Byzantine Historiography", p. 71.

31 Mullett, "Rhetoric, Theory and the Imperative of Performance", p. 152; Gaul, *Thomas Magistros*, pp. 22-32 for terminology and performances of rhetorical pieces in the *theatron*. Regarding the episodic structure of saints' lives and chronicles, Bourbouhakis/Nilsson, "Byzantine Narrative", p. 270 and for an argument of the performance of historical texts, Neville, *Heroes and Romans*, pp. 30-31. See also Croke, "Uncovering Byzantium's Historiographical Audience", pp. 25-53; Beaton, *Medieval Greek Romance*, p. 225; Marciniak, "Byzantine *Theatron*", pp. 277-86.

enjoyed throughout the reading.[32] The battle narrative seems to follow a rather fixed formula in most historical works partly because of literary demands and authorial intent, and partly because most battles followed a predictable sequence of actions. There are two types of information related regarding most battles described within historical texts; the first type would be the essential facts regarding the event – when and where the battle took place, identification of the opposing groups and their leaders, size of the opposing armies, a record of who won and who lost the battle and details about the damages suffered by the defeated party in the form of men lost, and booty and prisoners taken. These basic facts would form the skeletal structure that most historians embellished with a second layer of detail; this would include the emperor's or general's leadership and skill in battle, speeches delivered before or during battle to encourage the fighting men, prayers and private or public religious rituals meant to secure the aid of the divine and highlight the value of piety, dreams, visions and prophecies about the events at hand and moralistic comments by the author regarding the role of providence and fortune, wisdom and folly in the outcome of the conflict. Descriptions of heroic episodes about the actions of individual heroes or groups of fighters who distinguished themselves in bravery like other literary embellishments were an expected part of the battle narrative. While the inherent orality of battle descriptions was accentuated in written documents by language suggesting oral communication, the actual method of transmission of battle narratives is more complex. As was suggested earlier, battle stories were one form of storytelling that was not confined to the intellectuals alone, and while there is evidence of battle descriptions borrowed from Homer or Herodotus in the written sources, there are many more descriptions for which there is no firm authority.[33] It is reasonable to inquire (even if the results cannot be conclusive) whether cultural memories and popular oral traditions may not have provided some of the battle narrative materials. While written literary evidence of the existence of popular stories, songs and poems

32 There is a need for more study and analysis of battle narratives and parenthetical episodes in general in the context of oral performance before these ideas can yield a better understanding of the oral and auditory aspects of Byzantine culture.

33 Studies of the classicizing tendencies of Byzantine historians abound but as starting points see Moravcsik, "Klassizismus in der byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung", pp. 366-77; Cameron, "Herodotus and Thucydides in Agathias", pp. 33-52; Also more recently, Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity*, pp. 24-37; idem, "The Original Source of Tzimiskes' Balkan Campaign (971) and the Emperor's Classicizing Propaganda", pp. 1-18; Adshead, "Procopius' *Poliorcetica*: Continuities and Discontinuities", pp. 93-119; Sinclair, *War Writing in Middle Byzantine Historiography,* pp. 13-18.

such as the epic of Digenes Akrites is limited, in view of the inherent orality of the culture they must have played a significant role in the preservation of memories and mythologies of heroic battles and acts of bravery that in some cases entered mainstream literary tradition.[34]

In most battle descriptions, the basic presentation of facts is brief and the second category of detail, the authorial embellishment, constitutes the majority of the battle episode. These authorial insertions regarding aspects of the battle narrative demand further study before they can reveal not only to the classicizing sensibilities of authors but also a popular oral narrative tradition in Byzantium.[35]

2 The Battle Story as Propaganda

> For this man was truly most successful and fearsome in wars, so that often even the barbarians, when questioned by captives about how one man, the one indeed discussed here, put them to flight, said, "Whenever he comes against us to engage in war, we see a burning fire coming from his horse's breath, as well as from his weapons, that burns us and dashes us to the ground." For indeed often Doux himself told people about this gift saying, "In my youth as I slept, lo! There appeared a most glorious woman in purple and a fiery horse with her and weapons, giving off burning flame. And she said to me 'Get up and mount this horse.' And I mounted. And again she said, 'Arm yourself with these weapons.' And I armed myself. And she said to me, 'The enemies who blaspheme my Son will flee in terror from you.' And immediately she disappeared from view." Such is the story about this man.[36]

34 For the discussion of the oral and written traditions of the epic of Digenis see Beaton, "An epic in the making? The early version of Digenes Akrites"; Beaton/Ricks, *Digenis Akrites: New Approaches to Byzantine Heroic Poetry*; Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis, the Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions.* More generally, on the popular trend of verse making by the general population including artisans and women see John Tzetzes, *Historiarum vararum chiliades*, ed. Th. Kiessling, Leipzig 1826, p. 517.

35 The difficult issue of orality in Byzantine poetry has been addressed (along with bibliography and proposed theoretical structures) by Jeffreys, "Early Modern Greek Verse: Parallels and Frameworks", pp. 49-78.

36 *Ἦν γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς ὁ ἀνήρ εὐστοχώτατος πάνυ καὶ φοβερὸς ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις, ὡς πλειστάκις καὶ τοὺς βαρβάρους ἐρωτωμένους παρά τινων αἰχμαλώτων πῶς εἷς ἄνθρωπος αὐτοὺς τρέπει, ὁ δηλωθεὶς δηλαδή, φάναι· "Ὅταν πρὸς ἡμᾶς οὗτος ἐκπορεύηται πρὸς συμπλοκὴν πολέμου, πῦρ φλέγον ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄσθματος τοῦ ἵππου αὐτοῦ ὁρῶμεν ἐξερχόμενον, πρὸς δὲ καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ὅπλων αὐτοῦ, καὶ κατακαῖον*

When discussing the historical evidence of Byzantine warfare, we are referring not so much to the description of battles, but to a narrative tradition that was built around these events. In very general terms the idea that warriors make history through warfare is contingent upon the survival of stories of their deeds in the historical memory of the people for whom they fought. In Byzantium the rich literary tradition of histories and chronicles recorded political events and military conflicts but also served as propaganda by powerful figures to bolster personal reputations, cultural belief systems, and justify acts of war.[37] On a primary level the function of the war narrative was to record the sequence of events that were part of a conflict and in the process illustrate brave deeds that gave honour to individuals or groups and pointed to the humiliation suffered by those who lacked courage or divine favour by defining the victor and the vanquished in a conflict. Beyond these ideas, the war narrative also connected the reader/audience to the conceptual foundations that defined the characteristics of the "other" in society and at the same time provided justification for victory based on ideological superiority, military vigour, or divine providence.[38] Byzantine audiences would have been able to "unpack" the symbolism of a battle narrative as there was an active ideological exchange based on common cultural norms. Going a step further we might investigate whether there is evidence of an oral tradition embedded within these documents, suggesting that the transmission of culture was not strictly in a singular direction – from the literate top of society down – but that Byzantine culture exhibited a permeability that allowed popular, orally-created tradition a presence in written texts.

The episode described in the quote above is from the Life of Basil the Younger, a 10th-century Constantinopolitan saint whose lengthy *vita* included in addition to the traditional life and miracles historical events and figures

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ἡμᾶς ἐδαφίζει." Καὶ γὰρ κἀκεῖνος πολλάκις τισὶ διηγήσατο περὶ τοῦδε τοῦ χαρίσματος ὅτι "Ἐν τῇ νεότητί μου καθεύδοντός μου, ἰδοὺ γύναιον ἐνδοξώτατον πορφυροφοροῦν καὶ ἵππος (f. 15v) πύρινος ἅμα αὐτῇ, καὶ ἅρματα πῦρ φλέγον ἀφιέντα, καὶ εἴρηκέ μοι· 'Ἀναστὰς ἐπίβηθι τῷ ἵππῳ τούτῳ.' Καὶ ἐπέβην. Καὶ αὖθις· "Οπλίσθητι τοῖσδε τοῖς ἅρμασι.' Καὶ ὡπλίσθην. Καὶ εἶπέ μοι· 'Ἐκστήσονται οἱ ἐχθροὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ μου οἱ βλασφημοῦντες αὐτὸν ἀπὸ προσώπου σου.' Καὶ εὐθὺς ἀπέπτη." Καὶ ταῦτα μὲν περὶ τοῦ ἀνδρός. Sullivan/Talbot/McGrath, *The Life of Basil the Younger*, pp. 91-93 and Introduction, pp. 27-30.

37 Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire*, pp. 125-239; *eadem*, "Byzantine Political Culture", pp. 55-80; Sinclair, *War Writing*, pp. 267-299 on aristocratic promotional literature.

38 Kaldellis, "Agathias on History and Poetry", pp. 295-305 and more generally, Gay, "The Language of War and Peace".

centred in Constantinople and two elaborate apocalyptic visions.[39] While writing about the saint's early years in the capital the author Gregory used historical episodes to provide the backdrop for the Life. The story above was embedded within the narration leading to the regency of Patriarch Nicholas I Mystikos and the rebellion of Constantine Doukas in 913. Gregory's story, although favourable to Constantine Doukas who was set up as a heroic figure, does not refrain from criticizing his strategy against the regency that led to the death of the hero and his followers. According to the text Basil the Younger was consulted by Constantinopolitan nobles who sought out his advice on whether to support the general's revolt. The saint foretold of the failure of the movement, the brutal death of its leader and the public humiliations, punishments, and executions of many of his followers. The vignette speaks to the popular image of the general around whom a mythology had been created. Doukas himself, if we are to believe Gregory, was an active contributor to the formation of his own heroic reputation.[40] In addition to the documentation of the revolt in the *Life of Basil the Younger*, renditions of the revolutionary movement are also found in the Life of the Patriarch Euthymios, the chronicle of *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the works of Pseudo-Symeon and Skylitzes (also Kedrenos and Zonaras who follow him).[41] None, however, include the miraculous episode narrated above by Gregory. The hagiographer's source for the Doukas episode is not given but the language used suggests oral transmission of the story. While little is known about the author of the Life, his knowledge of Constantinopolitan topography and its active political and religious life is clear.[42] Is it possible to consider this episode part of a popular oral tradition? Prophesies and rumours regarding Doukas' imperial aspirations seem to have been circulating in the capital. According to the Continuator of Theophanes, one prediction attributed to emperor Leo VI forewarned Constantine Doukas

39 See note 36 above.

40 The episode is also preserved in *Vita Euthymii patriarchae CP*, ed. P. Karlin-Hayter, Brussels 1970, pp. 228-31. For Basil's foreknowledge of the rebellion and its outcome, see Sullivan/Talbot/McGrath, *Life of Basil the Younger,* pp. 92-105. For additional discussion of the rebellion see, D. Polemis, *The Doukai*, pp. 4 and 21-25.

41 The *Life of Euthymios the Patriarch,* ed. P. Karlin-Hayter, *Vita Euthymii patriarchae CP*, Brussels 1970, xxi. 131:1-133:2; Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bekker, pp. 373-84; Pseudo-Symeon, *Chronicle,* ed. I Bekker, *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus*, *Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae*, Bonn 1838, pp. 718-21, Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, pp. 197-200; Kedrenos, ed. I. Bekker, *Georgius Cedrenus Ioannis Scylitzae ope*, 2 vols., Bonn 1838-1839, pp. 279-82, Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Büttner-Wobst, pp. 458-61.

42 Sullivan/Talbot/McGrath, *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger*, pp. 7-19.

(when the latter returned to the capital in 907-8 after escaping from the Arabs) not to be fooled in believing that his name might suggest he was destined to rule, referring apparently to a popular belief that the name "Constantine" indicated a person providentially chosen for the imperial throne.[43] The story went on that the emperor said it was his own son, Constantine VII, who would be emperor while rebellion by Doukas would only lead to the general's own demise. Leo then did not invalidate the popular belief but instead he reoriented it to his chosen imperial candidate to the throne. It is impossible to know whether such an exchange ever took place between Leo VI and Constantine Doukas, but the story suits the cultural atmosphere of Constantinople and reflects the type of manipulation of popular opinion that might take place by the spread of prophesies and rumours that appear to have circulated abundantly in the capital. A vibrant verbal tone is evident in the telling of these stories assuring that the audience could identify with their method of transmission an element that gave greater credence to the storyteller's account.

A closer examination of how the Doukas story fits into the *Life of Basil the Younger* reveals the powerful narrative value of war stories and their use by Byzantine authors to add an authentic feel and drama to storytelling while connecting to a pool of shared ideals and beliefs through an active oral, visual and literary culture. In the case of Basil's Life the historically-based narrative context is interrupted so the author might explain the reasons for Constantine Doukas' reputation for military success, a key element in Doukas' popularity among the Constantinopolitan people and the elite.[44] Claims of eyewitness accounts recorded in the form of direct speech were a commonly employed literary device that added authority to the narration while contributing theatricality and liveliness to the text.[45] Related through the voices of

43 *τῷ παρὰ πολλοῖς εἶναι ᾀδόμενον*, Theophanes Constinuatus, ed, Bekker, p. 373. The expression appears to be formulaic, meaning to sing, chant, or praise, but its use does imply a broadly celebrated idea or person which is consistent the author's intention in this passage. On prophecy as a form of broadly accepted popular culture see, Magdalino, "The History of the Future and its uses", pp. 3-34 and for its historical permutations in the course Byzantine History, idem, *L'Orthodoxie des astrologues.*

44 The historical elements of the *Life of Basil the Younger* are discussed in Sullivan/Talbot/McGrath, *Life of Basil the Younger*, pp. 27-30.

45 The concept of the "eyewitness" account as an effective rhetorical device in classical Greek history writing was used by Thucydides and adopted by historians ever since, including Byzantine authors. For a discussion of the views of Byzantine historians on Thucydides, Reinsch, "Byzantine Adaptations", pp. 755-78, esp. 775-76; also Scott, "The Classical Tradition", pp. 60-74; Simpson, *Niketas Choniates: A Historiographical Study*, pp. 247-50.

Byzantine captives released by unidentified barbarians[46] it told of the general's devastating effect against his enemies on the battlefield.[47] The epic elements of the fire-breathing horse and fiery weapons that accompanied Constantine's battle presence were meant to be awe inspiring and provided an explanation of how a single warrior could have such devastating effectiveness. As a general, a member of the military elite and the son of a powerful Byzantine nobleman Constantine's training and aptitude for strategy were no doubt responsible for his ability as a military commander.[48] The episode's appeal to the Byzantine audience resided in the connections it made between core beliefs in supernatural figures, and their involvement in humanity's fate. The deeply entrenched belief in the archetype of the single armed horseman whose apotropaic presence might ward off evil, is a religious motif broadly disseminated in antiquity and deeply entrenched in the ideology of the Empire. Evidence of the diachronic use of this visual and literary motif can be found in its various versions present around the Eastern Mediterranean and Anatolia in coins, amulets and wall paintings, saints' lives, and literature[49] – not always

46 The term "barbarians" seems oddly generic considering the author's efforts at providing historic details elsewhere in the Life. We know that Constantine was appointed general of the Charsianon in 908-09 and subsequently given the command of the eastern troops as *domestikos ton scholon* (see Polemis, *The Doukai*, pp. 22-230), so it is not quite clear who the mentioned "barbarians" might have been. Regardless of intent, the omission serves to highlight the enemy as the "other" (non-Byzantine and non-Christian) and focuses the audience's attention on the qualities of Doukas as a defender of the faith, champion of the Virgin and brave warrior.

47 It seems odd that Byzantine captives asked questions of their enemy captors but prisoner exchange was a regular practice in Byzantine warfare and perhaps it is within this context that the text here should be understood. On this, see Sullivan/Talbot/McGrath *Life of Basil the Younger*, p. 93, esp. no 79. On the practice of prisoner exchange see, Leo VI Tactica, XVI, 9, ed. and trans. G. Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI*, Washington D.C. 2010, pp. 384-386.

48 Constantine's father was Andronikos Doukas who was a general in the Byzantine army in Asia Minor. His reputation as a brave warrior and strategist was preserved in the memory of the capture and execution of Muslim troops near Tarsus, see Polemis, *The Doukai*, 17 and Huxley, "Antecedents", pp. 323-24. For the preparation and conduct of the army in battle see Dennis, "The Byzantines in Battle", and for a broader discussion on the instruction and training of Byzantine military idem, "Some Reflections on Byzantine Military Theory", pp. 1-18; also idem, *The Taktika of Leo VI*; McGreer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*; Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*.

49 For the identification of the horseman with Solomon, Alexander and St. Sisinnios, Fulghum, "Coins used as amulets", esp. pp. 142-43, 147-48. Maguire, "Magic and the Christian Image", pp. 57-59 has a valuable discussion regarding pre-iconoclastic and post-iconoclastic artistic formulas and the transition from anonymous to clearly labelled images of saints. See also Vikan, "Two Byzantine Amuletic Armbands", pp. 35-38, who states

identified by name, but having a clear heroic or protective function.[50] More specifically, in 10th century Byzantium the armed horseman would have been associated with the Byzantine warrior saints, the most famous of whom were the two Theodores (Stratelates and Tiron), St. George and St. Demetrius.[51] Doukas' story interpreted within this backdrop seems to have intentionally associated Constantine with supernatural forces augmenting his appeal and attempting to define his destiny.[52]

In the text following the barbarian testimony the author incorporated what seem to be Doukas' own words. The narrative moves seamlessly from the physical manifestation of the fire-breathing horse and arms before the barbarians to Doukas' divinely inspired dream-vision.[53] According to Gregory, Doukas himself told the story of his vision of the Virgin dressed in imperial purple many times when asked about his prowess of the battlefield.[54] In the episode

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"Certainly the most popular amuletic image of the period, the Holy Rider was for Jew, Christian, and pagan alike the primal evocation, and invocation, of the triumph of good over evil.", p. 35.

50 Vikan, "Art, Medicine and Magic", pp. 79-81 and n. 16.

51 Walter, *Warrior Saints*, pp. 44-66.

52 The armed horseman/holy rider motif can be found in many other cultural and geographic contexts, a fact that explains the universality of the image and its appeal as a symbol beyond its identification with specific heroes, or deities; see Dimitrova, "Inscriptions and Iconography in the Monuments of the Thracian Rider", pp. 209-29. The image has apotropaic or healing qualities and seems to be prone to adaptation and incorporation within cultural systems intrinsically embodying the primal struggle of good versus evil, Fulghum, "Coins used as amulets", pp. 139-48.

53 The literary source for the fire-breathing horse is not clear although references to the mythological fire-breathing horses of the Greek god of war, Ares, do appear in Byzantine literature; see Quintus of Smyrna, *The Continuation of Homer,* ed. F. Vian, *Quintus de Smyrne. La suite d'Homère*, 3 vols., Paris 1963-69, 8:240-44. There is an additional parallel in Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn pp. 413, line 20 – 414, line 25; Wortley, pp. 388-89 according to whom St. Demetrios thwarted a Bulgar attack against Thessalonike in 1041 by first clearing the way before the Byzantine troops and then attacking the enemy by exuding fire (*νεανίαν ἔφιππον ὁρᾶν προηγούμενον τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς φάλαγγος, ἐξ οὗ πῦρ ἐξαλλόμενον ἐπυρπόλει τοὺς ἐναντίους. ἔπεσον οὖν πλείω τῶν πεντεκαίδεκαχιλιάδων, δορυάλωτοι δὲ ἐλήφθησαν οὐκ ἐλάττους τούτων*). In this account, Bulgar captives under oath were said to have witnessed the holy rider, while the casualties due to this assault numbered to 15,000 men. One can easily notice the parallels to the story of Constantine Doukas. Determining the historical development of this tradition is much more difficult but the story seems to have circulated in heroic episodes in the 10th-11th centuries.

54 Visions of the Virgin as empress appear in Byzantine writings (Brubaker, *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium*, p. 206; Chadwick, "John Moschus and his friend Sophronius the Sophist", p. 65, n.5); however, the omission of her name from the narration suggests

the Virgin appeared before the young man accompanied by a fiery horse and fiery weapons[55] and delivered a series of commands ("mount this horse", "arm yourself") to Constantine, a motif that is consistent with other literary accounts of dream vision narratives.[56] As such it would have been a familiar vision type to the audience of the Life connecting the episode further with a shared cultural and religious context. The Virgin's proclamation that the enemies of Christ would scatter before the hero formed a further connection to the common religious culture as the belief of the divine involvement in the world was commonplace in all levels of Byzantine society as was the faith in its protection of the Byzantine state.[57] The specific terminology would have been reminiscent of biblical passages and may have been deliberately added, relying on the familiarity of the terms to lend authority to the episode.[58] A Byzantine audience would not only appreciate the imagery but the aurality of the text, the shared experience of listening to narrated texts, to further connect with the story.

The miraculous and heroic elements of the narrative with a change in characters and settings were meant to engage the mind of the reader/audience with the powerful and fantastic images uniting Doukas' heroism with a divine purpose. The miraculous vision would have been an effective propaganda tool,

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that the emphasis in the episode is on her imperial persona as queen of the heavens. Polemis interpreted this as a possible explanation for Doukas' imperial aspirations, Polemis, *The* Doukai, pp. 24-25.

55 Biblical reference to the fiery sword left by God to guard the tree of life is found in and Genesis 3:24, while in Psalms 49(50):3 fire and tempest consume the sinners before God, in 2 Macc 15:11-16 the prophet Jeremiah handed Judas Maccabaeus a golden sword from God to crush his enemies and finally, in Rev 6:4 with the opening of the second seal a fiery red horse came forth and its rider was given a large sword and permission to take away peace from the world. Theodore bishop of Mopsuestia (392-428 CE) in the exposition on the Psalms elaborates: "*διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὁ μακάριος Δαυίδ φησιν ἐπὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ ὅτι προηγούμενον ἔχει πῦρ καὶ περὶ αὐτὸν καταιγίδα σφοδροτάτην", Le commentaire de Théodore*, Psalm 49:3b-c. The metaphorical image of the emperor fighting barbarian darkness with pious weapons emanating lightning was conferred upon the emperor John Komnenos in an oration by 12th century theologian and teacher of rhetoric Nikephoros Basilakes (*…τὸν ὡς ἥλιον πυραυγῆ ταῖς ἐκ τῶν βασιλείων ὅπλων ἀποπαλλομέναις ἀστραπαῖς ὅλην σκοτόμαιναν βαρβαρικὴν διαλύσαντα…*), Nikephoros Basilakes, *Orations and Letters of Nikephoros Basilakes*, ed. A. Garzya, *Nicephori Basilacae orationes et epistolae*, Leipzig 1984, B3:71-72.

56 For the function of dreams in historical texts see, Calofonos, "Dream Narratives", pp. 133-144, esp. p. 137 for the use of the verbal command as a fundamental element in dream/visions.

57 Oikonomides, "The Concept of 'Holy War'", p. 62.

58 Psalms 67(68): 2-3.

showing divine favour of Doukas' campaigns against the enemies of Byzantium and a justification for his claim to the throne.[59]

In the case of the story of Constantine Doukas the author of Basil the Younger's Life used the narrative episode in three ways: it showed the Saint's power of foresight and therefore his access to the divine (*parrhesia*). In this regard, the story connected the reader to the overall theme of the saint's sanctity and provided proof. Secondly, it established Doukas' reputation as a capable man of war and an agent of the Virgin intending to gain support for his rebellion. This element connected the brief battle narrative to its origin in the dominant concepts of Roman military virtue and Christian faith. It also offered evidence of the public opinion on Doukas' cause and spoke to the popular image of the man as a warrior and a nobleman.[60] Finally, it entertained and associated potent mental images to a historical memory of events anchored in the past. Doukas' story may have been forgotten or dismissed as an act of rebellion but the fairy-tale nature of the dream/vision with the Virgin in imperial robes, and the epic images of the fire-breathing horse and fiery weapons may have contributed to the powerful memory of the man embedded in popular culture. The Virgin's conferral of military power upon saints or individuals who then acted as her agents in battle was a very familiar literary motif from the 10th century until the fall of the empire in 1453.[61] By asserting a place in this dominant tradition the Doukas episode was meant to insinuate imperial right of power bestowed upon the hero by the Virgin along with the role of defender of the faith and protector of the faithful. The source of the story is unclear but it is possible that it was disseminated among circles favourable to Constantine Doukas for some time. Whether Doukas himself contributed to the creation of his own heroic tale, as the author Gregory implied, as part of an intentional

59 Doukas' defeat and death were attributed to poor strategic choice on his part (*κακῶς φρονήσας*) as the hagiographer voiced the opinion that a siege would have been a far more effective strategy than the march to the palace. Gregory's criticism followed the outcome of events in the story and supported the saint's prediction. By preserving Doukas' vision, however, the author explained why the general enjoyed so much popular support in the capital and confirmed the existence of an independent oral tradition. As for Doukas' miraculous weapons, they could be of no use to him as the hagiographer states that Constantine and his followers were bound by oath not to raise their weapons against fellow Christian soldiers. Sullivan/Talbot/McGrath, *Life of Basil the Younger,* pp. 96-99.

60 Even though Doukas' rebellion had a disastrous ending for him and his followers, the righteousness of his cause was verified later in the story by reports that bright stars shone above the heads of his slain comrades. Sullivan/Talbot/McGrath, *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger*, pp. 98-103.

61 For the Virgin's role in warfare see Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, pp. 61-103.

propaganda campaign to provide ground support for his rebellion is unknown, but it raises the possibility that such stories may have enjoyed the support of high-profile individuals who recognized their political value.[62] The centrality of the heroic Christian warrior image in the public consciousness was a powerful and lasting archetype. Doukas was so successful in shaping his heroic image that his reputation did not die with him. An impostor took on his identity and gathering rural support led two rebellions in Asia Minor before he too was put to death.[63]

The text is certainly only part of the larger context of the battle narrative, however, we can draw some preliminary conclusions regarding the written form of the tradition of these tales. In recording the battle story an author was producing propaganda that spoke to several audiences at once – the primary audience meant to access the story directly sharing memories of events that took place in recent times, along with the long train of common associations drawn from shared experiences and a familiar cultural context; and the secondary audience, one of the future generations was meant to incorporate the broader ideological lessons of the tale as morality lessons from the past. Both audiences would have been expected to see evidence of the ever-present power of the divine. The language of these stories was dictated by the authors' skill and sensibility and those of his primary intended audience, while the stories themselves are approachable and memorable in fundamental ways to broad audiences.

Doukas' story has potentially three oral traditions associated with it. The first connected to the "barbarian" witnesses who were said to have spoken of his might in battle and his extraordinary fiery weapons and fire-breathing horse. It is possible in this story to see reflections of memories of Constantine's military successes, or even those of his father Andronikos who was said to have put to the sword 18,000 Muslim soldiers in a battle near Tarsus in 904.[64] The memories of these battles could have been augmented in popular memory and enhanced with miraculous elements to explain and justify the victorious outcomes. The second oral tradition may have been initiated and disseminated by

62 Holmes, "Byzantine Political Culture", pp. 55-80; *eadem*, "The Rhetorical Structures of Skylitzes", pp. 187-99; Sinclair, *War Writing*, pp. 78-79.

63 *Theophanes Continuatus,* ed. Bekker, pp. 421-22; Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 228; Polemis, *The Doukai*, pp. 24-25. On the Byzantine heroic image, see Gregoire, "L' âge heroïque"; Neville, *Heroes and Romans*, pp. 121-138.

64 Arethas, *Scripta minora*, 26, ed. L. Westerink, *Arethae archiepiscopi Caesariensis scripta minora,* 2 vols., Leipzig 1968-1972, p. 243, lines12-13; Karlin-Hayter, "The Revolt of Andronicus Ducas", pp. 23-25; Polemis, *The Doukai*, p. 17; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, II, 1, pp. 163, 181; Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI*, pp. 188-89.

Doukas himself and his supporters, building on his battle reputation and perhaps using it to justify his imperial claims, taking on recognizable symbols of divine patronage. This tradition is evident in the language itself as the author Gregory wrote that Constantine had told the story himself many times (*πολλάκις... διηγήσατο*). As neither Gregory, the author of the Life, nor Basil the Younger are said to have met Doukas in person it is reasonable to suggest that this story reached the author by other means. The fact that Gregory is critical of Doukas' strategy in seeking to take command of the imperial palace by force further suggests that there was some time to reflect upon these events and that Gregory's sources, while sympathetic to Doukas' cause, were also critical of his strategy based on the outcome of the rebellion. More clearly encomiastic stories were associated with the martyred rebels who are elevated to the status of saints by the miraculous appearance of stars over their hung corpses.[65] Gregory's sources for the star miracle were said to be "trustworthy men" and based on the language different from the sources for Doukas' story. Finally, the fact that an impostor took over Doukas' identity after his death and went on to make imperial claims in his name allows us the reasonable speculation that the robust reputation created by Doukas and supported by heroic and miraculous oral tradition may have played a role in his success.

3 A Constantinian Battle Story Revisited

Eusebius' history inaugurated the dominance of the Christian historiographic point of view in the Byzantine world, emphasizing the concept that victorious warfare was associated closely with Christianity as Constantine used the new

65 Gregory's text reads: "A number of trustworthy men gave witness about how many they hanged on *phourkas* far from the city, that by night they saw above each one of these men a star coming down from the heavens and shining until dawn above the men hung on the *phourkas,* God showing by wondrous signs that those savages and false Christians killed them in vain (for once they had killed Doux, they ought to have spared the others who offered no resistance, did not raise a hand, did not contend, nor even cry out); and they in their insanity and cruelty (woe to their wretchedness!) shed innocent blood." Sullivan/Talbot/McGrath, *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger*, pp. 101-03. For similar miracle, see *Legend of the 42 Martyrs of Amorion*, eds. V. Vasil'evskij/P. Nikitin, *Skazanija o 42 amorijskich mucenikach* (Vers. 3 by Michael the Monk and Synkellos), St. Petersburg 1905, p. 35; and the *Life of Elias of Heliopolis*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Sylloge Palaistines kai Syriakes Hagiologias* XIX, 3 (Pravoslavnyi Palestiniskii Sbornik 57), St. Petersburg 1907, pp. 55-57.

faith to define the religious ideology of the Roman Empire.[66] The *labarum* created by Constantine and according to legend used before his armies prior to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 CE, appropriated Roman military traditions into a symbol that was both military and religious.[67] The literary tradition built around this symbol made it into a physical manifestation of the divine presence on the battlefield.

> The Cross of the Lord is a weapon that brings victory and triumph. It is the unconquerable weapon of emperors, horn of the Church,[68] destroyer of enemies and salvation of the faithful.[69]

The quote from John Chrysostom, the 4th-century Church Father, illustrates how closely the concepts of Christian faith and the ideas of warfare were intertwined in the Byzantine literary tradition.[70] While the terminology in Chrysostom was connected to the violence of warfare, it was counterbalanced by Christian terminology of salvation that could be understood as both physical and spiritual. Chrysostom artfully wove together the ideas of war and faith and connected them to imperial power. This added ideological dimension contributed a different layer of meaning to the Byzantine war discourse: the literary tradition of the war narrative that was passed down to the Byzantines by linguistic and cultural connections to Ancient Greece and Rome was put to the service of the Christian monotheistic religion.[71] Within this ideologi-

66 For antecedents of this ideology within a pagan context in Roman literary tradition, see Jones Hall, "Cicero's *instinctu divino*", pp. 647-671.

67 On the use of standards in the late Roman army see Coulston, "The 'drako' standard", p. 101-14. Constantine's vision on the eve of the Battle at the Milvian Bridge in 312 CE has generated a sizeable historiographical tradition that has focused on the many aspects of the vision, its historical record, and Constantine's politics and ideology. I will only list a few of the most recent studies for further reading and bibliography: Nicholson, "Constantine's Vision of the Cross", pp. 309-23; Van Dam, *Remembering Constantine at the Milvian Bridge*; Bremmer, "The Vision of Constantine", pp. 57-79.

68 Cf. Luke 1:69 where Christ is the "horn of salvation".

69 *Τροπαιοφόρον γὰρ καὶ νικητικὸν ὅπλον ὁ τοῦ Κυρίου σταυρὸς καθέστηκε· βασιλέων ὅπλον ἀκαταμάχητον, Ἐκκλησίας κέρας, ἐχθρῶν καθαιρέτης, καὶ τῶν πιστῶν σωτηρία.* John Chrysostom, *Treatise on the adoration of the holy cross,* ed. J.-P. Migne, *De adoratione pretiosae crucis, Joannes Chrysostomus Scr. Eccl*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus* (*series Graeca*) *MPG* 52, Paris 1857-1866, p. 836. The English translation above is my own.

70 Van Dam, *Remembering Constantine,* pp. 24-26; idem, *Becoming Christian,* pp. 15-45; also Ferguson, *The Past is Prologue*, pp. 121-22.

71 Scott, *The Classical Tradition,* pp. 61-74; Aerts, "Imitatio and aemulatio", pp. 89-99; Adshead, "Thucydides and Agathias", pp. 82-87; Bartusis, "Functions of Archaizing in Byzantium", pp. 271-78.

cal framework battle stories aimed at illustrating the principles that defined the spiritual and cultural identity of the Empire. The concept articulated in Chrysostom's work marks the beginning of a long-standing Byzantine ideological tradition that sought out manifestations of divine providence coming to the aid of imperial armies either in the form of miraculous occurrences (like the Doukas story described above) or in the form of religious artefacts (standards, crosses, relics or icons) and visions, all of which embodied the Christian divine trinity and its agents.[72]

In Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* are narrated two miraculous episodes that occurred during the campaigns against Licinius between CE 324 and 326.[73] According to Eusebius, Constantine related the story that the physical presence of the cruciform *labarum* secured victory in the part of the battlefield where it stood.[74] Subsequently, realizing the extraordinary qualities of the standard, the emperor deployed it in different areas of the battlefield as a "victorious antidote".[75] In Eusebius' narration of the story Constantine appointed a special guard for the standard composed of 50 men from his personal guard to transport it and secure its safety. During the battle and at a moment of great confusion the soldier carrying the standard handed it over to one of his comrades while he sought to escape the carnage. At once the soldier was killed by an arrow while the man to whom he had handed the standard was spared any injury. All the arrows hurled in his direction miraculously stuck the pole of the standard protecting the bearer form harm.[76] The fact that the victorious soldier remained nameless only highlighted what was important about him: his Christian faith. In Eusebius' narrative the protective power of the standard was

72 For a discussion of *encolpia* in the context of warfare, Pentchva, *Icons and Power,* pp. 61-104.

73 "These things the Emperor himself recounted to the present writer in a moment of leisure long after the events…", and a few lines later, "The story comes not from us, but once again from the Emperor himself, who in our hearing reported this too in addition to other matters." Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, ed. Winckelmann, 8:2 and 9:3, respectively. Cameron/Hall, *Eusebius. Life of Constantine*, pp. 98 and 232-233. The specific detail on the method of the story's transmission years after the end of the events satisfied Eusebius' claims for authenticity.

74 For an extended discussion on the date of the use of the *labarum* in the battle against Licinius and the reliability of Eusebious' account see Storch, *"Eusebian Constantine"*, pp. 145-49; Nicholson, "Constantine's Vision", p. 310, n. 6; Leeb, *Konstantin und Christus*, pp. 47-51.

75 The Greek is *νικητικὸν ἀλεξιφάρμακον,* Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, ed. Winckelmann, 2:7. See also Wynn, *Augustine on War and Military Service,* p. 62. Note that the language combining military and medical terminology conflated the concepts and in a sense sanitized them from the brutality of war.

76 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, ed. Winckelmann, 2:9.1-3.

extended to all its subsequent bearers, expanding the artefact's religious potency and function through time.

In the text of the 5th-century ecclesiastical historian Gelasius, part of the unique terminology associated with the *labarum* in Eusebius' text, its description as an antidote (*ἀλεξιφάρμακον*), is retained but applied instead to the grace of God not Constantine's standard.[77] The text preserved a brief description of the *labarum* constructed on Constantine's orders based on his vision prior to the battle of the Milvian Bridge and placed thereafter before the emperor's army.[78] The description of Licinius' defeat in 324 CE. was narrated briefly without allusion to the miracle of the cruciform standard.[79]

A similar arrangement in another 5th-century ecclesiastical history, that of Sozomen, did not connect the miraculous episode to the historical context of the battles against Licinius but preserved it independently in association only to the efforts of Constantine to Christianize his pagan subjects by offering proof of the powers of the standard of the cross through its connection to victorious battles. In this version of the story as well, Constantine commanded that the standard should be placed before his army. During military engagements, it was taken about the field especially where soldiers were struggling against enemy troops. The story of the two soldiers who carried the standard in battle also appears in this source but diminished to its essential elements with emphasis given to the miraculous nature of the standard and its protective effect against enemy artillery.[80] In addition Sozomen's narrative included the idea first presented in Eusebius' account that soldiers who were given the care of the standard never suffered injuries, captivity or death.[81]

In the 9th-century chronicle of George the monk, the author included the story of the battle against Licinius in very brief terms. However, in this version of the story the author's emphasis was on Constantine's victory through the power of the cross. The miraculous story about the protective quality of the standard against enemy arrows was not included.[82]

The tenth century *Synaxarium* of Constantinople reproduces a version of the story under 14 September, the Feast of the Exultation of the Cross. The narrative referenced Constantine's vision at the Milvian Bridge but its historical context is less important or certain and the author generally placed the vision

77 Gelasius, *Church History*, ed. Heinemann/Loeschcke, 1:5.6,

78 Ibid., 1:6.1.

79 Ibid., 1:12.1.

80 Sozomen, *Church History,* ed. Bidez/Hansen, 1:4.3-4.

81 Ibid., 1:4.4-5.

82 Georgius Monachus, *Chronicon breve*, ed. MPG 110, p. 609, lines 5-7.

either at a battle against Magnentius in Rome or against the Scythians on the Danube alluding to the authority of unidentified historians.[83] According to the story, Constantine's despair over the realization that his forces were greatly outnumbered was alleviated by the divine message of the cruciform vision which was said to have appeared at night composed of stars followed by the reading "Constantine, in this sign you shall conquer".[84] After constructing the standard based on his vision and placing it before his troops Constantine summarily defeated the enemy. Intended for a broader audience than a work of history, the story in the *Synaxarium* is written in the vernacular and exhibits oral storytelling elements: vague chronology, high emotional content (Constantine's desperation), miraculous divine response (in the form of a cross and a message written in stars) and is characterized by a loose poetic rhythm and rhyming qualities (*Ἰδὼν δὲ τὸν στρατὸν τῶν πολεμίων πολύν, τὸν δὲ ἴδιον κατὰ πολὺ ἐλάττονα* and *προπορευόμενος, γενόμενος, ἀναγορευόμενος*).

In the 12th-century history of Zonaras, the miraculous story of the *labarum* in the battle against Licinius was significantly rewritten. The battlefield soldiers were no longer present in the tale and in their place was an armed, mounted warrior holding a cruciform standard (instead of a flag) whom Constantine witnessed marching before his armies and leading them to victory. The author admitted ignorance of the historical context of the battle, placing it variably either against Licinius or Maxentius. The story however received renewed attention and further elaboration of the narrative with the addition of two brief miraculous episodes. According to Zonaras' text one episode took place at a battle near Adrianople where Constantine saw two young men advancing before his army and cutting down the enemy, and the second episode was set near Constantinople where the palisade around the emperor's camp was miraculously illuminated with a flashing light while the soldiers were asleep. In Zonaras' telling of the story the emperor interpreted the episodes as proof of God's direct involvement in all military successes.[85] The emphasis on Constantine I's repeated visions of divine presence on the battlefield either through the cruciform standard or through angels, saints, or physical phenomena, sheds light on how entrenched the idea had become by the twelfth century that military victory could not be achieved without divine

83 On the chronology of Constantine's campaign against Sarmatians at the Danube in 322/323 see Kovács, "Constantine, the Sarmatians, the Goths and Pannonia", pp. 193-211.

84 Synaxarium of Constantinople, ed. H. Delehaye, *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae: Propylaeum ad Acta sanctorum Novembris*, Brussels 1902, 8:1.

85 Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Büttner-Wobst, p. 6

favour or intervention.[86] The belief in the direct connection between the celestial world and the earthly Empire is in agreement with the artistic and literary tradition of the period.[87] The two short miraculous episodes are consistent with stories of warrior saints who wondrously appeared in battlefield engagements fighting on the side of the Byzantines common in histories and hagiographies of the middle Byzantine period.[88] The same storyline was repeated in the 13th-century Chronicle of Ephraim of Ainos written in twelve-syllable verse, closely following Zonaras' version of the tale.[89]

The 13th-century ecclesiastical history of Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos shows a return to the earlier version of the story with some variations.[90] The cruciform standard described as the "salvific weapon" was sent into battle against Maximinus not Licinius and by his (Maximinus') command was made the target of an arrow attack.[91] The bearer, identified in this story as a pagan, handed over the standard to a fellow soldier who willingly took on the task as he was the son of a Christian martyr. Setting aside his helmet and breastplate and wearing only a single tunic he eagerly carried the standard. While the cowardly soldier succumbed in a shower of arrows, the bearer of the standard was spared though divine intervention as the arrows stuck only the wooden pole of the cross. Xanthopoulos repeated the Eusebian idea that anyone who carried the standard could not suffer ill, be wounded or taken captive. While common elements between Eusebius' version and Sozomen's account are clear, there are minor inconsistencies and elaborations in Xantholpoulos' version. The

86 On this idea, Haldon, *Warfare*, pp. 22-24.

87 The iconography of the emperor holding the cross standard and its connection to Constantine I was a popular theme in the middle Byzantine period and was exploited by numerous emperors for its propagandistic value as vehicle of imperial authority. See Brubaker, "To legitimize an Emperor", p. 145; Kazhdan, "Constantin Imaginaire", p. 249.

88 White, *Military Saints*, p. 64ff.; Walter, *Warrior Saints*, pp. 41-44 and 277-284; McGrath, "Battles of Dorostolon", pp. 162-63. Banchich's commentary of the "History of Zonaras", p. 194, offers the possibility of biblical references to the single horseman and the two soldiers (2 Macc 3:24-26 [single celestial horseman and two youths protecting the treasury], and 2 Macc 10:28-30 [five celestial horsemen in battle on the side of the Jews]) and draws a parallel to the tenth oration of Nazarius in honour of Constantine I. Regarding the heavenly army (*caelestis exercitus*) in Nazarius's oration see Warmington, "Aspects of Constantinian Propaganda", p. 382; also, Bleckmann, "Pagane Visionen", pp. 151-70.

89 Ephraim of Ainos, *Chronicle*, ed. O. Lampsides, *Ephraem Aenii Historia Chronica* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae. Series Atheniensis 27), Athens 1990, ln. 332-342.

90 Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, *Historia ecclesiastica*, MPG 145-147, 7:37.30-47.

91 Xanthopoulos' history appears to be confused here. The battle described is most likely the Battle of Tzirallum that took place on April 30, 313 between Maximinus Daia and Licinius, not Constantine I.

most obvious was the confusion of Licinius with Maximinus as the pagan enemy in the battle.[92] The misidentification of the standard-bearer as the son of a martyr (attested in no other source) may have been the direct outcome of this confusion, as it was Maximinus Daia who was responsible for the last of the great persecutions of Late Antiquity and the martyrdom of numerous early Christian saints.[93]

Following the literary tradition of a single battle episode through time illustrates more than the continuity of the Byzantine historiographic tradition and the relationship between historical texts. Brought into relief these texts illustrate continuity with the past and highlight cultural contours of their own times. In Constantine's battle narrative, we notice the 4th-century elaborations of Eusebius intended to support the ideological establishment of a new religion, while versions from the 10th-12th century alternate the focus between the cruciform standard as a symbol of the divine and the emperor's privileged access to that power as the leader and protector of the Christian world, all consistent with the dominant ideologies of the time. Even when the story returned to its original outline in the 13th century it was augmented by a focus on martyrdom based on the author's interpretation of the appropriate historical setting. All the while the story lost greater degrees of connection to geographic and chronological anchors in favour of the ideological sensibilities and didactic interpretations of the various redactors.

4 Conclusion

The 6th century historian Procopius in his introduction to Book 1 of *De Bellis* described his intention to recount the wars fought by Justinian the emperor of the Romans against the barbarians in the East and West. Before beginning his narrative, he expounded further on the purpose of history and in the process expressed the idea that the preservation of the memory of great deeds was useful for the present as well as the future as it had predictive value. To the careful

92 It is possible that the confusion in Xanthopoulos' text was either due to the source he was following, poor memory, or both. Lactantius' version of the battle between Maximinus and Licinius in 313 has many similarities with Constantine's Battle at the Milvian Bridge, including a vision experienced by Licinius in which an angel dictated a "universal" prayer that Licinius gave to his soldiers the following day to secure victory. Lactantius, *Treatise on the Death of the Persecutors*, ed. and trans. J. Creed, *De mortibus persecutorum*, Oxford 1984, p. 46; Marcos, "Portrait of a persecutor: the defeat and death of Maximinus Daia in Christian Historiography", pp. 25-26.

93 Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History,* pp. 121-26.

reader history offered many examples of events whose similarity to current circumstances (especially in warfare) presented the opportunity to foreshadow the results of engagements as long as prudent preparation directed the course of actions.[94] Agathias went on to mourn the fate of glorious military victories that might bring temporary success to the victor only to be forgotten upon his death.[95] He credited divine providence (*θεία προμήθεια*) for elevating weak human memory by means of the discipline of history which he considered to be no less important than political philosophy. To Agathias, history offered entertainment with the variety of its stories (*ποικιλίᾳ τῶν παραδειγμάτων*) but is also didactic as it points to the successes of wise and just men and the failures of those who found their demise because of poor judgment or bad fortune. In his view men would not strive for greatness or endanger themselves for their country if the memory of their deeds was to last only for their lifetime.[96] Procopius' and Agathias' introductions to their histories effectively summarize the Byzantine point of view regarding the desired outcome of history writing about warfare and the purpose of the battle narrative. As an essential part of the cultural fabric of Byzantine society writing about warfare preserved ritual memory by passing it down to following generations even as it was rewritten in different renditions to fit the changing needs of individuals and political groups. Byzantine war narratives were expected to help construct authoritative identity for individuals and communal memory for society by connecting its oral and literary elements into a coherent and unified whole.

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94 Ibid.

95 *Agathiae Myrinaei historiarum libri quinque*, R. Keydell (ed.), *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae. Series Berolinensis* 2, Berlin 1967, *Praef.*1, and Frendo, *Agathias*, pp. 3-4. For the idea suggested in numerous prooimia that historians wrote to record the past before it faded from memory, Grigoriadis, "Study of the Prooimion of Zonaras", pp. 327-44.

96 Agathias' motivation for writing history has been discussed by Kaldellis (with a bibliography of opposing views) in his articles, "The Historical and Religious views of Agathias: A reinterpretation", pp. 206-252 and "Agathias on History and Poetry", pp. 295-305 where he explains (p. 297) that personal motives of seeking out glory and reputation were behind his efforts to compose a history of his time.

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CHAPTER 6

Alternative Means of Conflict Resolution

Tilemachos Lounghis

1 Avoiding War

Confirming the fact that medieval sources sometimes argued thoroughly on eventual connections between whole contexts, Peter the Patrician,[1] one of the most prominent Byzantine officials and authors of the 6th century,[2] declared that "no one denies that peace is a blessing, while war is evil". This was a commonplace view held throughout the ages, and Peter's words were a slogan carrying great weight because, as emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus stated in the mid-10th century, "it is always greatly to the advantage of the emperor of the Romans to be minded to keep the peace…".[3] The nation with which the emperor must be at peace (in this case, the Pechenegs) is not as important as the imperial general advice. According to Procopius of Caesarea, the more the Barbarian affairs prevailed during the times of the Great Invasions, the more the traditional value of the Roman soldiers was reduced to nothing and the Romans, who had since then been using the decent and convenient term of alliance, were finally reduced to be under the rule of the foreigners.[4] In another quite defamatory passage, he asserts that although emperor Justinian was always eager to seek wars, he was busy with theology during long-lasting wars[5] and so he avoided the battlefield. A foreign policy, then, which followed the changes in social and ideological thought lent this whole historical period a general sense of crisis – a crisis and breakdown of ancient structures and ideas.[6]

1 On Peter the Patrician, see Martindale, *PLRE* III, pp. 994-99 (Peter 6), and Antonopoulos, *Πέτρος Πατρίκιος*, passim.

2 Quoted by Menander Protector, fragm. 6, 1, ed. Blockley, p. 56: ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἀγαθὸν εἰρήνη καὶ τοὐναντίον πονηρὸν ὁ πόλεμος οὐδεὶς ἀντερεῖ.

3 *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravcsik, 1, 16-17.

4 Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Wirth/Haury II 1, 4.

5 Procopius, *Anecdota*, ed. G. Wirth/J. Haury, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia, vol. 3*: *Historia Arcana*, Leipzig 1963, p. 116.

6 Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt*; Rémondon, *La crise de l'empire romain*; Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*; Brandt, *Das Ende der Antike*.

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The method of avoiding war following the utter defeat by the Goths near Adrianople in 378 has for the first time been connected to the magnificent reception of the Gothic king Athanaric in Constantinople at the very beginning of 381.[7] Emperor Theodosios I (379-395), reigning in the East and West and whose mostly victorious Roman army consisted of various nations and tribes, may for instance have continued to be remembered by history as "friend of the Goths",[8] but on the death of his elder son and successor Arcadius (395-408) the crisis of the barbarian invasions in the West took a very acute shape. Moreover, as the imperial army needed reforms (those reflected by the *Notitia Dignitatum*) and the refitting of a great army required time, the sound evaluation of Procopius cited above seems to be equally valid regarding the affairs of the East where, since the beginning of the 5th century according to the same author, the East Roman government was tempted to entrust the tutelage of the young emperor Theodosios II (408-450) to the Great King of Persia Yazdgard I (399-*c*. 420).[9]

At almost the same time, the Novel VII, 3, published jointly by Emperors Theodosios II and Valentinian III (425-455), claimed that the Roman government should act steadily as the old Romans had done, that is to place the interests of the *res publica* above their own imperial interests and, consequently, to push the Roman boundaries to the end of the world.[10] While the eastern Roman Empire not only reacted to these disasters that plagued the West during the 5th century but also reacted in a distinctly warlike manner reflecting quite naturally the special conditions prevailing in the eastern provinces,[11] two successive peace treaties with Persia (in 422 and 442) contributed to create a general feeling of avoiding armed clashes of a major pattern. Besides, and despite temporary persecutions of Christians in the Persian Empire, war against the Sassanid rulers could be declared only when the usual friendly negotiations had failed, as was the case of the so-called "loan" requested from

7 On this event see Wolfram, *Die Goten*, p. 83.

8 Kulakovsky, *Istorija Vizantii*, p. 152.

9 Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Wirth/Haury, I 2, 1-15.

10 N. Theod. VII, 3, ed. Mommsen/Meyer, pp. 19-20: *Nos quidem semper singulis atque universis ea provisionum maiestate consulimus, qua res Romana paulatim ad totius orbis terrarum processit imperium. Quibus enim adquiruntur artibus bona, iisdem scimus etiam adquisita servari. Quis dubitat suis commodis veteres rei publicae commoda praeferentes mundi finibus fines imposuisse Romanos?*

11 Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome*, p. 15, speaking of "the growth of a distinctive "Byzantine" society in the East" and, in p. 48, of an estrangement between the emperors of the East and the West towards mid-5th century.

the emperor Anastasios (491-518) by the Great king Kawad (480-531) in 502[12] or perhaps somewhat later in 527; but this war was also initially a defensive one, as were the previous two wars under Theodosios II.

Starting at the end of the 4th century, the principle of moving Barbarians against other more threatening Barbarians, such as the policy formulated by Agathias in the 6th century,[13] lasted (with intervals) for a very long time, that is until the end of the 11th century, apparently when Alexios I Komnenos called the Coumans against the Pechenegs.[14] It must also be recorded that even at the height of Byzantine strength there were moments of temporary weakness, such as for instance under Leo VI who moved the Magyars against the Bulgars,[15] and also the Regency of Constantine VII which incited the Pechenegs against the same Bulgars of tsar Symeon.[16] On the contrary, the principle of hiring foreign mercenary units was valid only before and after the so-called "thematic era" of the Byzantine armed forces (mid-7th–mid-11th century). If emperor Zeno (474-475 and 476-491) reversed his predecessors' policy of active intervention to save the western half of the Roman Empire, his pacifist policy towards the Barbarian kingdoms of the West after 476, confirmed by two important embassies sent to the Vandals in Africa and to Odoacer in Italy, is to be ascribed to an evident lack of allies. This serious gap was filled by emperor Anastasios, who turned his attention to the (then heathen) Franks. The Byzantine government became aggressive for the first time under the reign of Justin I (518-527), when Chalcedonian orthodoxy – established since 451 – felt strong enough to enlarge the imperial boundaries which had remained almost the same since the reign of Arcadius. Justin I and his nephew Justinian yielded to the pressure of the senate under the *quaestor sacri palatii* Proclus and were eager to refuse to accept the tutelage of the young Persian prince Chosroes offered to them by king Kawad.[17]

Taking into account these officially "familiar" relationships between the two "Great Powers" of the Late Antiquity, we could presume that until the end of the reign of Justinian (527-565), war with Persia was to be avoided, officially at least.[18] The overall attitude of the Eastern Roman Empire towards its eastern

12 Cf. Lounghis/Blysidu/Lampakes, *Regesten*, no 272, with sources and bibliography.

13 Agathias, *Historiae*, ed. Keydell, V, pp. 14, 1.

14 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, VII, 6, 2, VIII, 4, 3-8, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, pp. 218 and 243.

15 Theophanes Cont., ed. Bekker, p. 358.

16 Ibid., p. 387.

17 Cf. Lounghis/Blysidu/Lampakes, *Regesten,* p. 468. Cf. also, Lounghis, Die kriegerisch gesinnte Partei der senatorischen Opposition, pp. 25-36.

18 Cf. the treaty of 532 (Lounghis/Blysidu/Lampakes, *Regesten*, *Regesten,* 964), cited in the *CJ* I, 17, 2, 23 as *aeterna pax, quies perpetua,* ἀπέραντος εἰρήνη and the treaty of 561 (Dölger,

frontier under Justinian was continuously defensive, due to the well-known imperial aggressive western priorities, and this pacific policy towards the East was only to be countermanded by Justin II (565-578) into a clearly belligerent behaviour which did not end until the famous eastern campaigns of Heraclius (610-641) up to 627; that is, as long as the senate of Constantinople was still strong enough to impose its orthodox ideology on the whole inhabited world. And this aggressive attitude of the senatorial aristocracy of Constantinople in the early Byzantine centuries has been interpreted as being valid for the whole Byzantine history, which induces us to error.

It seems that there never existed a clearly expressed state theory or doctrine of avoiding war, as described by Peter the Patrician above; according to the 6th-century law scholar John Lydus, for instance, emperor Zeno the Isaurian was a genuine coward who paid the enemies to avoid war instead of fighting.[19] When emperor Justinian – according to Agathias of Myrina – got older, he also became lazier and preferred to incite his foes into fighting against each other by bribing them with presents.[20] Despite the fact that the term *εἰρήνη* (peace) is totally absent from the prooimia of the imperial Byzantine documents (when it does not mean the peace of the Church),[21] we know that emperor Maurice (582-602) called himself, amongst his other titles, *mansuetus* (peace-loving);[22] and Heraclius went even further, ascribing to himself the titles of *ἡμερώτατος* (temperate) and *εἰρηνικός* (peaceful) together with *νικητὴς* (victorious)[23] – which must insinuate that he saw himself as a master of both war and peace – but this must be nothing other than pure court protocol.

During the military-plebeian revolution of 602-610 under the centurion Phokas, Byzantium seems to have recognized for the first time (previous armistices concluded by the exarch of Italy Smaragdus had only a local effect) the legal existence of the Lombard state in Italy by signing the treaty of 608,[24] which must have been respected also by Heraclius, who abolished the rule of

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Regesten, 1441), cited as πεντηκοντούτιδες σπονδαί by Menander Protector, Fragm. 6, ed. Blockley, pp. 54-86; on the contrary, Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 239, lines 18-20 specify: πάκτα εἰρήνης, ἔτη ιζ΄.

19 John Lydus, *On powers or the magistracies of the Roman state*, ed. Bandy, Ioannes Lydus, *De magistratibus populi Romani*, Philadelphia 1983, III, 45: δειλὸς δὲ ἦν, μᾶλλον δὲ δείλαιος, καὶ τους πολέμους ἀπηργυρίζετο.

20 Agathias, *Historiae*, ed Keydell, V, 14, 1.

21 Cf. for instance Hunger, *Prooimion,* pp. 32, 54, 170.

22 Epistula Austrasica no 42, ed. W. Gundlach, *MGH, Epp.* III, p. 148.

23 Cf. Konidaris, "Die Novellen des Kaisers Herakleios", p. 62.

24 Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum* IV, 35, ed. G. Waitz, *MGH, SSRL,* p. 128. Cf. Christou, *Byzanz und die Langobarden*, p. 159.

Phokas. It is worth saying, however, that the "terrorist" regime of Phokas was compelled to seek peace, as it was threatened from many sides. Starting from the last years of the reign of Heraclius, dominated by the irresistible Arab advance, avoiding war became almost impossible for the Empire, and there is no emperor of the 7th century who did not have to fight against the new powerful foe. However, the most orthodox emperor, Constantine IV (668-685), seems to have been eager to avoid war in the equally orthodox West, where he concluded a sovereign peace treaty (*δεσποτικὴ εἰρήνη*) in the year 678 according to Theophanes and Nikephoros,[25] while he openly avoided fighting the Bulgars crossing the Danube two years later (680) and abandoned his entire army on the bank of the river without leadership under the pretext of a gout attack.[26]

Yet, there was no time for peace during the so-called "Dark Centuries". Given the well-known martial character of the first Isaurian emperors and the victorious tradition on the battlefields which they left to their immediate successors, the Byzantine Empire was almost continuously at war throughout the 8th century,[27] and the same could be said to be true of the reign of the Isaurian-like reformer emperor Nikephoros I (802-811), who moreover is mentioned by Theophanes as an "enemy of peace" (εἰρήνης ἐχθρός).[28] On the contrary, when this "evil" ruler met with the death he deserved in the Bulgar plains, another most orthodox emperor who succeeded him, Michael I Rhangabe (811-813), is said by the Life of Saint Eustratios to have been led to avoid civil war by virtues granted to him by God (ὑπερβάλλουσα ἀγαθότης καὶ ὀρθόδοξος γνώμη).[29] According to the contemporary sources, Michael I belongs to the most ill-

25 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 356; Nikephoros, *Short History*, ed. Mango, p. 34.

26 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 358; Nikephoros, *Short History*, ed. Mango, p. 36. Cf. on the whole topic, Stouraitis, *Krieg und Frieden*, pp. 219f.

27 Cf. however a lost letter, difficult to date, of Leo III (717-741) to the caliph of Damascus (from Umar II 717-720 to Hisham 724-743), which has as its incipit: Ὡς οὐδὲν οἶδα τῆς εἰρήνης μακαριώτερον. See Dölger/Preiser-Kapeller /Riehle/Müller, *Regesten* 283b, p. 151-152.

28 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 490.

29 Life of St. Eustratios of Augara, ed. A. Παπαδόπουλος-Κεραμεύς, *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμικῆς σταχυολογίας,* Sanktpeterburg 1897-1898, p. 374. Sometimes, however, civil war was not to be avoided, according to sources such as Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, pp. 416-420; Psellos, *Chronographia* I, ed. Impellizzeri, pp. 224; and Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Peréz Martín, pp. 7-12 for instance, speaking of the popular riot against the alleged "monster" Michael V Calaphates in April 1042. On the contrary, Kekaumenos, Strategikon, ed. Litavrin, pp. 304-306 (who took part in the events on Michael's side according to Skylitzes, p. 419,55-56), seems rather undecided.

advised and ill-treated Byzantine emperors,[30] to be succeeded only by a series of – dare it be said – military commanders such as Leo V, Michael II, Theophilos and the warlords (Bardas, Petronas) who led the victorious Byzantine army in various campaigns under Michel III. Thus opened a new glorious and belligerent era in the Byzantine annals, which was to last at least until the end of the first quarter of the 11th century.

The fifth book of the Continuators of Theophanes dealing with the reign of Basil I (867-886) and glorifying his deeds and achievements asserts that among his political aims was the enlarging of the imperial boundaries (ὡς…πλατύνῃ τὰ ὅρια τῆς ἀρχῆς),[31] something that takes us back to the time of the belligerent attitude of Justin I under the pressing influence of the senatorial aristocracy. But this is only the external view. While Justin I tried to enlarge the eastern boundaries which had remained unchanged since the reign of Arcadius, Basil I enlarged the Byzantine boundaries in the East and the West, going beyond the boundaries imposed on the Byzantine emperors by the so-called *Constitutum Constantini* in the third quarter of the 8th century. According to the text of the Continuators, Basil I yields only when the enemy asks for peace, thus avoiding useless bloodshed;[32] being informed of the mighty naval forces Basil I had gathered in the capital Constantinople, the Arabs of Syria "favoured peace" (τὴν ἡσυχίαν ἠγάπησαν) and abandoned their aggressive plans,[33] while Genesius asserts that Basil offered peace to the valiant leader of the Paulicians Chrysocheir,[34] a generous offer that was rejected by the insolent heretic.

It is however worth saying that Basil's son and successor Leo VI (886-912) declares in his Taktika, which is a purely military treatise or handbook, that the Byzantine emperor must always embrace peace for his own subjects, as well as for the Barbarians[35] and, generally speaking, refrain from war.[36] According to the narrative sources of the 10th century, Emperor Leo VI was rather eager to conclude a peace treaty with Symeon of Bulgaria (893-927),[37] but he was not followed in this matter by his brother and successor Alexander (912-913), who was against his brother's deeds.[38] This sharp differentiation of attitudes between the brothers has, it seems, nothing to do with the alleged military

30 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 499-500, calls him ἀκυβέρνητος.

31 *Vita Basilii*, ed. Ševčenko, p. 132.

32 Ibid., p. 138-39. On the new imperial ideology of the Macedonian dynasty, cf. below n. 146.

33 Ibid., p. 236. The sentence reflects a certain Byzantine pride.

34 Genesius, *On reigns*, ed. Lesmüller-Werner/Thurn, IV, 35.

35 Leo VI Taktika, II 197, ed. Dennis, p. 34.

36 Ibid., IV 207, p. 34: καὶ πολέμων ἀπέχεσθαι.

37 Theophanes Cont., ed. Bekker, p. 358; Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 177.

38 Theophanes Cont., ed. Bekker, p. 358; Skylitzes, *Synospsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 177.

weakness or strength of the Empire during their respective reigns, but only with the opposite political directions followed by them.

If, however, both of Basil's aforementioned imperial sons had the Bulgar front in their sights in the cases cited above, the patriarch Nicholas Mystikos (in both his patriarchates, 901-907 and 912-925) distinguished himself by his subtle political thinking and bold prerogatives in his protests against the violation of the peace treaty by the tsar Symeon in 913.[39] A year later, in 914, the patriarch insisted that the enmity and division and hatred that had arisen between Romans and Bulgars "in the place of friendship and peace and union" (ἀντὶ τῆς φιλίας, ἀντὶ τῆς εἰρήνης, ἀντὶ τῆς ἑνώσεως) constituted a cruel offence (against God).[40] A little further on in the same letter, he expresses his warm wishes for a "truly enduring peace" (εἰρήνη ὄντως σταθηρά) between Romans and Bulgars,[41] and closes his numerous admonitions to the Bulgar ruler by certifying that the peace and love which have subsisted for so long between Romans and Bulgars are nothing other than the Edifice of the Holy Spirit.[42] For the patriarch, war with the Christian Bulgars was fully condemnable from a religious point of view.

Several years later, in 922, the patriarch went as far as to threaten his "beloved" son openly: he stated that the emperors would not cease from inciting every race to his (Symeon's) destruction, whether Turks, or Alans, or Pechenegs, or Rus, or other Scythian nations, until they have finally destroyed the race of the Bulgars.[43] These ominous messages, coming from the head of the Church which had been responsible for the Christianization of the Bulgars, were followed by the text of the peace treaty of 927 whose author – either unknown according to its most recent editor or Theodore Daphnopates according to Jenkins[44] – went so far as to compare the end of this destructive and long-lasting war with Christ's resurrection.[45]

Therefore, avoiding war against Bulgaria must have been a major concern for the patriarch Nicolas Mystikos, who also wrote two letters to Arab

39 Nicholas Mystikos, *Letters*, ed. Jenkins/Westerink, v 26-31.

40 Ibid., 8, 11-14.

41 Ibid., 8. 92.

42 Ibid., 8. 125-127.

43 Ibid., 23. The chronology of the letters and the bulk of the English translation are the work of the editors.

44 Jenkins, "The Peace with Bulgaria", pp. 287-303.

45 Ἀνέστη εἰρήνη καὶ διασκορπισθήτωσαν οἱ ἐχθροὶ αὐτῆς, Stavridou-Zafraka, "Ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν Βουλγάρων συμβάσει", pp. 345-406.

authorities[46] claiming and praising the need for the two most prominent lordships on earth, that is, that of the Saracens and that of the Romans, to be in contact and brotherhood (δεῖ…κοινωνικῶς ἔχειν καὶ ἀδελφικῶς, p. 2), as the Byzantine strategy after the victorious battle of Garigliano in 915 and especially since the beginning of the reign of Romanos I Lakapenos (920-944) had become increasingly aggressive towards the West, somewhat later even reaching the shores of southern France.[47] On the contrary, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, who succeeded his father-in-law, openly avoided warlike adventures in Italy, where his entrusted commander-in-chief Marianos Argyros concluded a peace treaty in 955/956.[48]

> The emperor Constantine was a mild man, who always stayed in his palace, and by peaceful methods won the friendship of all the world. The emperor Nikephoros, on the other hand, shuns the palace as if it were the plague. We call him a man of contention and almost a lover of strife; he does not win people's friendship by offering them money, he subdues them to his sway by terror and the sword.[49]

Such is the incredible difference between the political attitudes of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus on the one hand, and Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969) on the other, as described by the Byzantine high officials to Liutprand, bishop of Cremona, on his second embassy in Constantinople in 968. Experience on the battlefields however clearly demonstrated that the warlord Nikephoros Phokas was victorious only in his eastern campaigns, while in 967 he carefully avoided war with the Bulgars and refused to invade the enemy territory due to

46 Nicolas Mystikos, *Letters*, ed. Jenkins/Westerink, 1 and 2. It is uncertain whether the receiver of these letters was the emir of Crete, or the caliph of Baghdad himself.

47 Flodoardi, *Annales* 931 (*MGH SSRG,* III, p. 379): *Graeci Sarracenos per mare insequentes usque in Fraxinidum saltum, ubi erat refugium ipsorum, et unde egredientes Italiam sedulis praedarunt, quietam reddentes Alpibus Italiam.* Cf. also *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravscik, 51, 199-204, p. 25; Lounghis, *Byzantium in Eastern Mediteranean*, pp. 151, 153.

48 P. Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken* I, Wien 1975, no 43, 51, p. 338: *κατῆλθεν ὁ Μαριανὸς πατρίκιος ἐν Καλαβρίᾳ καὶ ἐγένετο ἀγάπη.* Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, pp. 266-67.

49 *Constantinus imperator homo lenis, in palatio manens perpetuo huiusmodi rebus amcas sibi nationes effecerat; Nikephoros vero basileus, homo ταχύχειρ, id est militiae deditus, palatium ceu pestem abhorret et vocatur a nobis prope simultatis amator atque argumentosus, qui non pretio sibi gentes amicas, sed terrore et gladio sibi subditas facit*, Liutprand of Cremona, *Legatio* 55, p. 212; cf. *The works of Liutprand of Cremona*, intro. and transl. by F.A. Wright, New Work 1930, 269.

its unfriendly nature, which was precipitous and full of thick dark vegetation and narrow passages according to Leo Diaconus.[50]

This unfriendly nature of the Bulgar landscape next to the Byzantine borderline was to be successfully invaded somewhat later, in 971, by the strong army mobilized by his murderer and successor John I Tzimiskes (969-976) against the Rus.[51] Throughout the latter's reign and under those of Basil II (976-1025)[52] and his younger brother Constantine VIII (1025-1028), restored to their imperial rightful claims, the term peace (εἰρήνη) is totally absent in the Greek contemporary sources (in the broadest possible meaning of the term) other than mentioning the rebellions of the nobles Skleros and Phokas, which were purely domestic affairs.

Anna Komnene, writing in the 12th century and most probably after the death of her imperial father, ascribes every default of the Byzantine military recruitment to the so-called ἀστρατία (demobilization) prevailing in the Byzantine Empire prior to the reign of Alexios I (1081-1118),[53] despite the fact that the overall situation of the Empire on the death of Basil II must have been satisfactory enough. Emperor Romanos III Argyros (1028-1034), for instance, thought that it would be too easy for him to win the laurels of military victories in the West, and so he prepared himself for less easy victorious campaigns in the East,[54] a dangerous illusion that was to lead to the first disasters of the 11th century. In any case it must have been under the latter's reign that the memory of the many times when the Byzantines had been saved by miracles and by alliances was revived.[55] These were the first signs of weakness.

Avoiding war in 11th-century Byzantium has been seen by modern scholars as a result of an increasingly prevailing feeling of the "illusion of a long lasting

50 Leo Diaconus, *Historia*, ed. Hase, p. 62.

51 Ibid., p. 132. Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 295; Cf. also Dennis, "The Byzantines in Battle", pp. 165-178.

52 According to Psellos, *Chronographia* I, ed. Impellizzeri, p. 48, the soldiers of Basil II, marching from battle to battle, openly insulted him (ἐς προὔπτον ὑβριζόντων αὐτὸν), something that he suffered calmly and he continued to smile, remaining in a pleasant mood, arguing that only by such a compact battle array could the war come to an end. In Psellos' short narrative on the reign of Constantine VIII (I, 56-68) there is no reference to issues of war and peace whatsoever.

53 Anna Komnene, VII, 7, 1, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 220; in the German translation by D.R. Reinsch (Köln 1996) p. 251, the term used is *Soldatenmangel.*

54 Psellos, *Chronographia* I, ed. Impellizzeri, p. 78. According to Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 384-85, the Arabs of Aleppo asked for a peace treaty in 1032.

55 Psellos, *Chronographia,* I, ed. Impellizzeri, p. 86.

peace" (*l'illusion d'une paix durable*).[56] By expressing this point of view one has in mind the famous declaration of emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055) who in the preamble of his Novel of the year 1044 speaks in following terms: "our enemies are quiet while peace reigns among our subjects; thus the Roman affairs enjoy tranquillity and there is nothing deserving our solicitude".[57] In fact, according always to the ambiguous credibility of Psellos, Constantine IX desired to reign in peace and not in war (εἰρηνικῶς ἀλλ'οὐ πολεμικῶς τὴν ἀρχὴν διεξάγειν), something that most of the previous emperors intended to do (ὅπερ δὴ καὶ τῶν ἄνωθεν αὐτοκρατόρων οἱ πλεῖστοι διενοήθησαν).[58] If they did not achieve it, this was due to the usual superior force that dominates human lives.

With this rather superficial explanation, Psellos justifies all emperors after Basil II who favoured the senatorial aristocracy of the 11th century, neglected the army and, generally speaking, the military affairs, and brought the Empire to the brink of destruction. According to him, Emperor Constantine X Doukas (1059-1067) paid no attention to anybody's advice but to himself, and, thus, he missed his aims which consisted of dealing with the nations surrounding the Empire by sending presents and other amenities in order to save sums for military affairs.[59] The most probable reason for this is to be found in the confusion reigning at that time in almost all sectors of the Byzantine administration due to the concomitant neglect of the armed forces on land and at sea. Speaking of a Pecheneg invasion for instance, Michael Attaliates expresses his utter indignation that neither this (and this includes many others too) enemy threat had been dealt with not through armed force but only through peace treaties (σπονδαῖς δὲ μόνον εἰρηνικαῖς).[60]

As surprising it may be, the term εἰρήνη (peace) in the sources of the 11th century has nothing to do with avoiding war.[61] In the texts of John Skylitzes[62]

56 Lemerle, *Cinq études*, pp. 249-312, esp. 263 and 265.

57 *Jus Graecoromanum*, ed. J. and P. Zepos, I, Athens 1931, p. 621.

58 Psellos, *Chronographia,* I, ed. Impellizzeri, p. 316-318.

59 Psellos, *Chronographia* II, ed. Impellizzeri, p. 308: … ἑαυτῷ μόνῳ συμβούλῳ πρὸς τὰ πρακτέα χρώμενος, ἔστιν οὗ καὶ ἡμάρτανε τοῦ ἀκριβεστέρου σκοποῦ· τὸ γοῦν βουλόμενον αὐτῷ ἦν μὴ πολέμοις τὰ περὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν διατίθεσθαι, ἀλλὰ δώρων ἀποστολαῖς καί τισιν ἑτέροις φιλοφροσύναις δυοῖν ἕνεκα, ἵνα μήτε [τὰ]πλείω καταναλίσκοι τοῖς στρατιώταις, καὶ αὐτὸς διαγωγὴν ἔχειν ἀθόρυβον.

60 Attaliates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martìn, p. 51.

61 Lounghis, "Un empire romain devant la féodalisation", pp. 87-95.

62 Skylitzes, Synopsis, ed. Thurn, pp. 385, 399, 430, 431, 435, 454, 457 (*σπονδαί*).

and that of his Continuator,[63] as well as in the *History* of Attaliates,[64] whose text has too many common points with the Continuator of Skylitzes, and in the so-called "Ὕλη ἱστορίας" of Nikephoros Bryennios,[65] the term "peace" is employed only to refer to some unavoidable intervals in a period dominanated by war, and sometimes (even worse) "civil war". On the same grounds a century later Isaac I Angelus gathered monks around him and prayed to God through them to bring an end to the civil war, that is, the revolt of the general Alexios Branas.[66]

In the late 1070s, the retired general Kekaumenos advised his reader – if the reader is a military commander – not to deny the enemy offers of peace, even if this entails a financial tribute; only land concessions must be avoided, but also in this case territorial concessions could be accepted if the enemy recognizes himself as a tributary of the Empire,[67] and then it is recommended that these tributaries do not have to be crushed by heavy state taxes.[68] A little further on however, Kekaumenos insinuates that war is unavoidable and necessary only when a foreign nation invades the Empire;[69] and further he insists that the imperial army and navy must never be abandoned to dissolution and poverty,[70] as they constitute the main strength of the central power. The old general may be advising his reader in this way either from personal experience or through presentiment, but he states that as a military commander, the reader must be suspicious of eventual peace offers.[71]

63 Skylitzes Continuatus, ed. E.T. Tsolakes, *Ἡ συνέχεια τῆς χρονογραφίας τοῦ Ἰωάννου Σκυλίτση*, Thessalonica 1968, pp. 148, lines 15-16, p. 151, lines 20-21, p. 156, line 21, p. 161, lines 19-20, p. 170, line 12,.

64 Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Peréz Martín, p. 118 (Seljuk envoys asking for peace), p. 123 (σπονδαὶ καὶ συνθῆκαι after the battle of Mantzikert), p. 173-74 (Nikephoros III Botaneiates avoids war against the Turks who had already conquered the whole East [τῆς Ἀνατολῆς πάσης κυριεύσαντες ἤδη] thanks to the prestige he inspires and the various gifts he sends to them). The term γαλήνη in Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Peréz Martín, p. 170 refers to peace in both fronts, East and West.

65 Bryennius, ed. P. Gautier, *Nicéphore Bryennios. Histoire* [Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae. Series Bruxellensis 9) Brussels 1975, p. 231.

66 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 383: ἐδεῖτο αὐτῶν τοῦ θεοῦ διασκεδασθῆναι τὸν ἐφεστῶτα ἐμφύλιον πόλεμον. Cf. also ibid., 422: λύει ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἐμφύλιον πόλεμον καινοπρεπῶς (in Magoulias's translation: God, in a novel manner, terminated the civil war).

67 Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Litavrin, 18, p. 166.

68 Ibid., 82, p. 300.

69 Ibid., 26, p. 176 and 28, p. 188.

70 Ibid., 87, p. 308.

71 Ibid., 111, p. 320.

2 Avoiding Pressure from East and West

It may not be excessive to assert that during the period from the accession of Alexios I (1081-1118) to the Fourth Crusade (1204), it became a matter of uncertainty whether the Empire would be able to survive. This was despite the continuous endeavours of the Komnenian emperors to resist the successive assaults of the Normans from the West (from 1081 to 1186), the invasions of the Pechenegs from the North (from the mid-11th century to 1122/3), and the threat from the Seljuks and Turcoman in Asia Minor, as well as the fatal impact of the first four Crusades which ended by abolishing the Byzantine Empire as a territorial entity. Particularly after its confinement in the Balkans Byzantium became more vulnerable to attacks coming from the Christian West than from any other direction.[72]

Avoiding war thus became almost impossible, unless for very brief intervals, and the multitude of potential foes strongly impressed Byzantine educated persons. "Because it was the whole West", says Anna Komnene, "that is all barbarian nations residing from the other coast of the Adriatic to the Columns of Hercules all of them emigrated in mass pushing forward whole families and marched against Asia passing over the remainder[73] of Europe".[74] Under these rather alarming circumstances Alexios I hastened to conclude peace treaties with all eventual foes.[75] The East Roman Empire had entered a new era in its existence, an era during which it was compelled to rebuild an important part of its former strength.

Given the Christian faith of the Westerners, it was to be expected that during the passage of the Crusaders from the Byzantine provinces, the Empire should also be at war with the infidels of Asia Minor. The long-term peace established shortly before the death of the first Comnenian emperor was to be disturbed and nearly abolished under his successors.[76] Notwithstanding the

72 Lounghis, *Byzantium in Eastern Mediterranean,* p. 165.

73 *The remainder or rest of Europe* (διὰ τῆς ἑξῆς Εὐρώπης – das übrige Europa in Reinsch's translation) means the European territories beyond those between the Adriatic and Gibraltar (Columns of Hercules). Otherwise, here are meant the Balkans or the European provinces of the Byzantine Empire, "our European provinces" according to Anna.

74 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, X 5, 4, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 297.

75 Cf. e.g. Dölger/Wirth, *Regesten* (I,2), no. 1145 (peace with the Pechenegs), no. 1164 (peace with the Seljuks), no. 1169 (also with the Seljuks) and no. 1173 (with the Serbs).

76 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, XIII, 8, 7, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 407. In Anna's *Alexias* the word πόλεμος is to be found no less than 248 times; in XII, 5, 2, p. 371 Anna says: *εἰρήνη μὲν γὰρ τέλος ἐστὶ πολέμου παντός* (der Frieden nämlich ist das Ziel eines jeden Krieges, according to Reinsch's translation).

fact that peace with the Normans had been settled under Alexios I who had dictated the well-known treaty of Devol[77] in 1108 and – at least in the following period – the Latins were recognized as non-ordinary barbarians,[78] under John II Komnenos (1118-1143) who did not have to confront a passage of Crusaders through his lands war in the East would mean obvious vulnerability in the West (the Balkans) in view of a sudden Norman attack.[79] In order to restrain and check this dangerous eventuality the Byzantines returned once more to the old German imperial alliance.[80] It is most likely that the Comnenian administration envisaged the possibility of absorbing as many Latin warriors as it could.

The problem became more complicated under Manuel I (1143-1180) when the first Crusading army was a German one led by Conrad III (1138-1152) himself; in the spring of 1147 the feared Roger II (1130-1154), Norman king of Sicily, attacked and occupied Corfu and pushed forward to continental Greece, where he plundered Thebes,[81] and it was since then, according to various indices, that emperor Manuel I seemed to have begun to think of an eventual campaign in Italy[82] with concomitant treaties with the republic of Venice and further hopes for a Byzantine-inspired political settlement in Germany (including the promotion of Austria, previously a *Mark*, to Duchy after the sending of Princess Theodora Komnene there[83]) entailing territorial gains in Italy; all these at the Norman expense.

The 12th-century author John Kinnamos records Manuel's endeavours to conclude peace with Hungary,[84] with the Normans in 1158,[85] and with the Seljuks,[86] whereas he seems surreptitiously to lament when reminding of Manuel's preparations for the fatal campaign of 1176 by supplying the Byzantine fortresses in Western Asia Minor "as long as peace lasted" (τῆς εἰρήνης κατεχούσης ἔτι).[87] The imperial agony of an eventual and simultaneous

77 Ibid., XIII, 12, 1-28, p. 413-22. Cf. also Lampakis/Leontsini/Lounghis/Vlysidou, *Byzantine Diplomacy*, pp. 76-82.

78 See Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel Komnenos*, p. 32.

79 Runciman, *History of the Crusades* II, p. 211.

80 On the German-Byzantine alliance, cf. the collective volume *Το Βυζάντιο και οι απαρχές της Ευρώπης* (Επιστήμης κοινωνία), Athens 2004, pp. 53-74 and below.

81 Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meinecke, p. 92.

82 Ibid., pp. 96 and 101.

83 Cf. Hiller, *Heinrich der Löwe*, pp. 72 and 184.

84 Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meinecke, pp. 120-121 and p. 133-134.

85 Ibid., p. 174.

86 Ibid., p. 208.

87 Ibid., p. 294.

enemy assault from East and West is obvious in Niketas Choniates' summary description of the last years of Manuel I.[88] After the defeat of Myriokephalon, under the threatening danger of Frederic I Barbarossa's eastern projects (1152-1189)[89] and by the always decent vocabulary of Niketas Choniates, we learn that the "eastern nations" resigned to plunder Western Asia Minor by one of the following two procedures: some of them by imposing temporary payments (προσκαίροις φιλοτιμήμασιν) and others by annual tributes (ἐτησίων ἀπολήψεσι φόρων), just like housemaids use to do (adds Choniates) by pushing the legal inhabintants (owners) out of the house.[90]

In his narrative of the Third Crusade under Frederick Barbarossa, the chronicler Ansbert is sound enough: "after the death of Manuel I (a brief but most accurate description) the empire of the Greeks was mutilated in various ways … nevertheless the strength of the reign of the Greeks was waning day by day".[91] Further, he points out the heavy losses inflicted by the Germans to Isaac's military units.[92] Then, the Byzantine army started to avoid clashes with the Crusaders and became resigned to supervising them from a certain distance;[93] the attitude of avoiding not only war but any other ominous incident becomes evident in the way emperor Isaac I Angelus (1185-1195) writes to Frederick Barbarossa, carefully avoiding the imperial title for himself and replacing it with the term "governor of the Romans" and granting it generously to the German ruler.[94]

Besides, his friendly attitude towards Saladin after the latter's victory at Hattin and the conquest of Jerusalem in 1187 rendered the Byzantine Empire suspect to Western eyes,[95] something that entailed the widespread fame amongst Western sources that the "Greeks" (that is, the mostly mercenary

88 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 199.

89 Cf. Appelt, *Die Kaiseridee Friedrich Barbarossas,* passim; Hecht, *Die byzantinische Außenpolitik*, pp. 67-73; Kresten, "Der „Anredestreit" zwischen Manuel I. Komnenos und Friedrich I. Barbarossa", pp. 65-110.

90 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 368.

91 *Imperium Grecae multis modis est laceratum…attamen regni Grecorum vires de die in diem pessumdabant*, Ansbert, *Historia*, ed. Dobrowsky, p. 32.

92 Ibid., p. 36.

93 *non publico bello…sed latenter observantem*, ibid., p. 44.

94 Ibid., p. 51: *Ysacius in Christo fidelis divinitus coronatus sublimis potens excelsus heres corone Constantini magni et moderator Romeon Angelus nobilissimo imperatori antique Rome regi Alamannie et dilecto fratri.*

95 Runciman, *Crusades* II, pp. 467-68, and III, p. 8.

Byzantine army) avoided war and usually fled instead of fighting.[96] It is difficult to say whether the Byzantine armies, which had fled, were composed exclusively of natives or were mixed with foreign mercenaries (as happened very often during the reigns of Alexios I, John II and Manuel I) or even of entirely foreign units (as had happened for instance in Justinianic times). Some modern historians however have asserted that the Byzantines would have lost their empire as early as during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos had they not hired Latin knights in their armies.[97]

3 Avoiding Aggressive Wars

Avoiding aggressive wars clearly shows that a lack of the available but necessary means or tools for waging a war, which must however be conducted on the ground of unchangeable ideological principles, led the government in question to have recourse to other methods. On this basis it is evident that where the Eastern Roman Empire endured after 476, the oecumenical character of the Roman state was maintained for much longer. This contributed to maintaining through the centuries the idea that the empire was eternal and that the states founded by the "barbarians" in Western Europe were only the emperor's subordinates in lands which, more or less, and according to circumstances, remained Roman.[98] Accordingly, they were to be recovered somehow; in other words they were to be re-conquered by arms.

As the almost uninterrupted attempts of the East Roman emperors to submit these recently founded states had failed, despite unilateral treaties (*foedera*)[99] and unlucky military expeditions throughout the 5th century, the "Eastern Romans" (*οἱ Ἑῷοι Ῥωμαῖοι*)[100] finally turned their attention to more indirect methods of intervention: to wit, to look for some – or at least one – strong and trustworthy ally amongst these Barbarians possessing the formerly Roman provinces in Western Europe. It was already becoming apparent to the whole world that since the 4th century, that is, very soon after the triumph of Christianity, the Orthodoxy which was defined by four Oecumenical Councils

96 Cf. e.g. Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*, I §140 and §157; II §312, pp. 140, 157, p. 123; Robert of Clary, *La conquête de Constantinople*, XVIII, 60-65, XL, 29, LXVI, 47-49, LXXIX, 5-7, LXXX, 5-6, pp. 18, 43, 66, 79.

97 Kazhdan/Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, p. 173-74.

98 Lampakis/Leontsini/Lounghis/Vlysidou, *Byzantine Diplomacy*, p. 20.

99 Cf. Wirth, "Zur Frage der föderierten Staaten", pp. 231-51.

100 Lounghis, "Le programme politique des 'Romains Orientaux'", pp. 369-76.

up to the year 451 as the Empire's only legitimate religion was considerably different in its creed, or doctrine, from the Arian Christianity that had been taught to the Goths by bishop Ulfila in 341.

Thus, when the Barbarians came to dominate the West, Western Europe became Arian, while the Eastern Empire continued to be orthodox and an orthodox political programme began to take shape in Constantinople which aimed at the recovery of the Roman West with help from a reliable orthodox ally in the West who would possess a significant army. With this view, ambassadors of the emperor Anastasios visited Tours in 508 and bestowed on Clovis (Chlodoweg, 481-511), the Barbarian king of the Franks, the title of *patricius* or *consul honorarius*.[101] Clovis, along with his warriors, had only recently (506/7) been baptized as an orthodox Christian, in contrast to the other Barbarian rulers in the West who were Arians. Thus, when Justinian I decided to undertake the war against the Goths of the West in 534/5 he sent a letter to the Merovingian descendants of Clovis which was at the same time a treaty of alliance (this, in my view, may also be the reason for the considerable reduction in the number of the Byzantine armies sent to Italy under Belisarius). This document, which is reproduced by Procopius,[102] calls on the only orthodox allies which the Eastern Empire had in Western Europe, the Franks, to participate in the war which Justinian was starting against their common enemy, the Arian Ostrogoths. The continuator of Procopius, Agathias, considers the Franks to be the most orthodox people and almost Romans.[103]

It was the arrogant Clovis's grandson, Theudibert I of Austrasia (534-548), who participated in the recovery (the Reconquista) of the West from the Arian Goths and called Justinian *pater*;[104] and a little later, emperor Maurice called the Frankish king Childebert II (575-595) *parens*[105] as the highest officials of the Empire were called in some of the laws. It seemed as if this orthodox alliance was to last forever, as it rendered almost useless the old institution of the *foederati* who, moreover, were mostly Arians; and indeed it did last for a long time, of course with short or longer intervals and with slight modifications according to various circumstances, as it was to be tested later. All these various controversial ideological, political and religious factors, however, did not

101 Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* II, 38, ed. H. Omont/G. Collon/(rev.) R. Poupardin, *Grégoire de Tours. Histoire des Francs, Collection de textes pour servir à l'étude et à l'enseignement de l'histoire*, Paris, 1913, p. 72. The precise title bestowed upon Clovis by Anastasios is still disputed.

102 Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Wirth/Haury, II V, 5, 8-9.

103 Agathias, *Historia*, ed. Keydell, I, 3.

104 Epistola austrasica 19 = *MGH. Epistulae* III, p. 132.

105 Epistola austrasica 42 = *MGH. Epistulae* III, p. 148-149.

change its true potential about the western alliance, as was stressed much later by emperor John VI Cantacuzenus (1341-1354) in the mid-14th century: "… according to their [i.e. of the Gibeline; Γεμπλίνοι in the text, "imperial Germans of that time"] old alliance and friendship with the governance of the Romans".[106]

This permanent trend of the Byzantine political ideology for a steady alliance with the prominent power of Western Europe, justified in the 10th century by emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus who referring to "the traditional fame and nobility of those lands and races",[107] has nothing to do with Agathias' statement in the 6th century, according to which Byzantium used to incite the Barbarians to fight against each other,[108] a commonplace statement repeated several times in modern research. The latter is valid for almost all periods of Byzantine history and has to do primarily with defensive wars, while the Frankish (western) alliance aimed at wars of a much broader calibre and extent. Linked to such a major political project is the oldest authentic Byzantine imperial document which deals with a common war and survives in the original; it is the well-known "St. Denis Papyrus" (Paris, Archives Nationales K7, no 17). According to this document, which lacks both its beginning and end, a Byzantine emperor who is not named in the text calls on his western colleague to come to the help of the Byzantine forces by sending a Frankish expedition, which is to be commanded by the son of the Western emperor, who is referred as ὁ ῥίξ, the rex.

The distinguished Byzantinist F. Dölger has connected this amazing document with a Byzantine embassy of the emperor Theophilos (829-842) which was received at Trier in the winter of 841/2 by the Western emperor Lothar I (840-855).[109] This embassy of Theophilos is mentioned in several literary sources, both Byzantine and Western.[110] In spite of the improvements and cor-

106 Cantacuzenus, ed. L. Schopen, *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris historiarum libri iv*, 3 vols. (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae), Bonn 1828/1831/1832, I, p. 335-336: …κατὰ παλαιὰν συμμαχίαν καὶ φιλίαν τῆς σφετέρας τε καὶ τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίας…ὅταν του δέονται, προσήκειν ἑκατέρους κομίζεσθαι παρ' ἀλλήλων. Cf. G. Weiss, *Johannes VI. Kantakuzenos. Aristokrat, Staatsmann, Kaiser und Mönch ind der Gesellschaftsentwicklung von Byzanz im 14. Jaahrhundert,* Wiesbaden 1969 and D.M. Nicol, *The reluctant Emperor. A Biography of John Cantacuzenus, Byzantine Emperor and Monk (1295-1383),* Cambridge 1996.

107 *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravscik, 13, 114-123: Διὰ τὴν ἄνωθεν τῶν μερῶν ἐκείνων καὶ τῶν γενῶν περιφάνειαν καὶ εὐγένειαν.

108 Cf. n. 20 above.

109 Dölger, "Der Pariser St. Denis Papyrus", pp. 204-214.

110 *Bedae Chronici Continuatio Constantinopolitana* (*MGH AA*, XIII, p. 343); *Annales Bertiniani*, an. 842 (*AQDR* II, p. 58); Genesius, *On reigns*, ed. Lesmüller-Werner/Thurn, III, 16, p. 50; Theophanes Continuatus, ed. M. Featherstone/J.S. Codoñer, Chronographiae quae

rections proposed a little later by W. Ohnsorge,[111] in scholarly literature the document retained the character which Dölger attributed to it: "das älteste Kreuzzugsdokument", in the sense that the two emperors who existed in the 9th century, eastern and western, were inclined to combine forces as Christian states to fight the Saracen infidel, who had landed in Sicily in about 828 and, after the occupation of Spain (since 711), now even threatened the Italian mainland.

The Byzantines also searched for a permanent ally in the East, where they maintained a mostly defensive attitude as they had to face a major foe, that is initially the Sassanid Persian Empire and, after its fall in the 7th century, the Arab Caliphate's first Ummayad (661-750) and then Abbassid (750-1055). Some much earlier attempts to create a serious diversion to the Persians from the North by using the Nephtalite Huns apparently met with little success,[112] and equally ineffective were their attempts to use the Ghassanid Saracens from the South;[113] the "friendship" established in 524/527 between the king of the African Vandals Hilderic (523-530) and Justinian;[114] the letter-exchange between Justin I (518-527) and the Great King of Persia Kawad (480-531) in 525/526;[115] and the treaty with the converted to Christendom Hun king Grod (or Gordas) aiming at the defence of the Kimmerian Bosporus by the Huns in 528.[116]

The same difficulty, *mutatis mutandis,* continued to prevail on the eastern frontier after the Arab conquests. The Arabs who inherited Persia's political rivalry with Byzantium[117] led the seriously threatened Empire to look again for an ally powerful enough to advance its political and military claims. In cases when the desired permanent ally could not always be relied upon, the empire sought the creation of a multi-ethnic coalition with the aim of destroying or weakening whoever was regarded as its main enemy. This political and military aim had been declared openly by the patriarch Nicholas Mystikos to tsar Symeon, namely that the empire would not stop gathering forces from

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Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur libri I–IV (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, LIII), Berlin 2015, p. 194; Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 79.

111 Ohnsorge, "Das Kaiserbündnis von 842-844", pp. 131-83.

112 . Cf. for instance the treaty of 521/2 with the Huns in Lounghis/Blysidu/Lampakes, *Regesten,* p. 432, with sources and bibliography.

113 Ibid., p. 454, with sources and bibliography.

114 Ibid., p. 463 with sources and bibliography. On Hilderic cf. *PLRE* II (Cambridge 1980), p. 564.

115 Ibid., p. 468 with sources and bibliography.

116 Ibid., p. 531 with sources and bibliography. On Grod (or Gordas) cf. *PLRE* III, p. 557-558.

117 See Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom,* pp. 203-17.

everywhere in order to crush the Bulgars.[118] This belligerent attitude was the chief strategy of imperial foreign policy in Central and Eastern Europe, supported by the diplomatic equilibrium achieved in the West and based on the Frankish alliance, particularly modified and reinforced under the Macedonian dynasty (867-1057), in whose times not a single emperor avoided war, as can be deduced from the existing evidence. On the contrary, there are some traces leading indirectly to war leaders who were suspected of avoiding engaging the enemy against received orders, such as the case of the lord admiral Eustathius during a battle against the Magyars on the Danube under the reign of Leo VI.[119]

The required imperial ally against the Arabs in Eastern Europe was certainly not orthodox – and not even Christian but heathen – but he was urgently needed as a counterpoise or opposing menace to the terrifying threat hanging over the Empire from the end of Justinian's reign in the shape of the dreadful Avars.[120] The Khazars[121] to whom the Empire bound itself diplomatically through a princely marriage alliance from the time of Heraclius[122] were pagans ruled by a Khan or Khagan just like the Avars. This special relationship with the Khazars was to last a long time, supported by successive marriage alliances

118 Cf. above, n. 43.

119 Cf. *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravscik, 51, 86-88: Τοῦτο δὲ ὅλον ἐποίησεν ὁ βασιλεὺς διὰ τὸ ἀποβλέπειν τὸν πατρίκιον Εὐστάθιον καὶ δρουγγάριον τοῦ πλωίμου πρὸς πόλεμον τῶν ἐναντίων. Jenkins's translation: "All this the emperor did because the patrician Eustathius, the lord admiral was intending to engage the enemy" should be modified as follows: "…All this the emperor did in order that the patrician…..engages the enemy", insinuating that the patrician Eustathius was not eager to engage the enemy. The same is valid regarding the otherwise excellent essay by Belke/Soustal, *Die Byzantiner und ihre Nachbarn*, p. 254: "All das tat der Kaiser, weil der Patrikiow und der Drungarios der Flotte Eustathios den Kampf mit den Feinden im Auge hatte" should be corrected as follows: "All das tat der Kaiser, damit der Patrikios usw Eustathios den Kampf mit den Feinden im Augen habe". The proof of the lord admiral's attempt to avoid engaging the enemy is to be found a little further on (pp. 51, 120-24), where the Magyar enemies expressed their admiration for the gallant behaviour of the captain (πρωτοκάραβος) Michael Barkalas, asserting that "this man ought to be named patrician and be head of the navy" (…τοῦτον ἔπρεπε ὀνομάζεσθαι πατρίκιον καὶ εἶναι κεφαλὴν τοῦ πλωίμου). Here we have two opposite examples, a commander-in-chief avoiding war (he obviously belonged to the imperial opposition) while a subordinate captain (loyal to his emperor) is eager to fight gallantly, and is recognized for that by the enemies.

120 See Pohl, *Die Awaren. Ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa, 567-822 n. Chr.*, München 1988 and, last but not least, G. Th. Kardaras, *Το Βυζάντιο και οι Άβαροι (ΣΤ΄- Θ΄αι.). Πολιτικές, διπλωματικές καὶ πολιτιστικές σχέσεις,* Athens 2010.

121 See Pletneva, *Khazary*, Moskva 1976; Noonan, "Byzantium and the Khazars", pp. 109-32.

122 Zuckerman, "La petite Augusta et le Turc", pp. 113-123.

with the imperial house (emperors Justinian II and Constantine V) up to the end of the reign of Leo IV "the Khazar" (through his mother) in 780.

After the catastrophic defeat of the Avars by Charlemagne in 803 it was natural that the Khazar alliance should fall into abeyance without, however, being entirely abandoned. Its end seems to have come with the rise to power of the Macedonian dynasty under Basil I and on the pretext of the conversion of the Khazars to the Jewish faith, against which the emperors Basil I and Leo VI took severe measures.[123] As a consequence the Khazars, who had been friends and allies for more than two centuries, relatively quickly became implacable enemies. The Macedonian dynasty, anxious to preserve the alliance and the subsequent equilibrium with the West under the new omens, proved to be equally anxious to bring into its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe first of all the Bulgars and the Rus. It is with these that imperial marriage alliances were now contracted, although the Uzes and Alans could be described as a kind of "extension" of allied pressure on the Khazars.[124]

Originally, the nomad people of the Uzes[125] in conjunction with the Rus who had descended on the Empire via the river Dnieper were able to keep at bay a new and very numerous people, who were especially threatening to the whole of Eastern Europe, namely the Pechenegs,[126] with whom the Byzantines should be officially in permanent peace, according to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and with whom the Byzantine Empire maintained very correct relations which were renewed each year.[127] On the other hand, the Uzes and Alans of the Caucasus together with strong reinforcements from Cherson and the Bosphorus (Pantikapaion-Kerch) could undertake expeditions in concert against the Khazars who were now the Empire's most powerful enemy, since the Byzantines enjoyed a complete liberty of action in East-Central Europe thanks to their permanent Western alliance, and Constantine Porphyrogenitus revealed in his writings a desire for the oilfields of the Caucasus.[128]

Moreover, repeated expeditions of Rus allied to the Empire under the command of Sviatoslav against the Khazars in the 960s culminated somewhat later, in 1015 in the transportation of Rus on a large scale by the Byzantine fleet for

123 Lounghis, "Byzantine Political Encounters concerning Eastern Europe", pp. 19-25.

124 Lounghis, *Κωνσταντίνου Ζ΄ Πορφυρογέννητου De administrando imperio*, p. 101.

125 Savvides, *Οι Τούρκοι και το Βυζάντιο*, p. 204.

126 Ibid., p. 202-3.

127 *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravscik, 1, 16-17; cf. also above, n. 3.

128 *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravscik, 53, 493-511; cf. also Lounghis, *De administrando imperio,* pp. 151-53.

the same purpose.[129] However, changes were afoot. In Michael Psellos' *Chronographia* there is an obvious aversion of external wars.[130] Besides, the progressive hiring of more and more mercenary troops from the 11th century onwards apparently overshadowed the practice of mass-employment of foreign nations in order to annihilate the principal threat, something that was rare and difficult in any case, constituting thus a clearly "imperial" prerogative and the practice had to be abandoned by all means.

4 Avoiding Crusader Impact

The final loss of the Italian possessions to the Normans and the subsequent confinement of the Byzantine Empire to territories on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea in the third quarter of the 11th century[131] reduced Byzantine political and military activities to Eastern Mediterranean dimensions in the strict sense of the term. Particularly after the defeat of Mantzikert and the fall of Southern Italy in 1071, the semi-official apologist of the Byzantine court, Michael Attaleiates, expressed himself in the following terms: "agony of death has been extended upon us since the Gothic and the most execrable nations have conquered the East and the West, while we surrendered to naivety and carelessness and, what is more true, to folly and fury. Because, raging against ourselves and fighting without mercy and scorning death, we appeared to the foreign nations as cowards and without virility, preferring to flee at war…".[132]

On the international level in the 12th century the Byzantine Empire continued to maintain a certain prestige and authority, which, however, progressively

129 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 354. Cf. Lounghis, "Über die zwei gegesätzlichen Richtungen der byzantinischen Außenpolitik", pp. 35-43.

130 Psellos, *Chronographia* I, ed. Impellizzeri, pp. 20-24; cf. also II, p. 22 (βαρβαρικὸς πόλεμος). On the contrary he obviously exaggerates using the word πόλεμος for the internal struggle (the uprising against Michael V, or the revolt of George Maniakes or Leo Tornikios).

131 CF. also Herrin, *Byzantium*, p. 221: "… Byzantium had to face two different enemies on remote frontiers, separated by thousands of kilometres. Handbooks of military strategy strongly advised against allowing this situation to arise".

132 Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Peréz Martín, p. 145-46: περιέσχον γὰρ ἡμᾶς ὠδίνες θανάτου κατὰ πᾶσαν ἑῴαν καὶ τὴν ἑσπέραν τῶν Γοτθικῶν καὶ μιαρωτάτων ἐπικρατησάντων ἐθνῶν καὶ κατατρυφησάντων τῆς ἡμῶν εὐηθείας ἢ ἀμελείας, ἢ τό γε ἀληθέστερον εἰπεῖν, θεοβλαβείας καὶ μανίας, ὅτι κατ' ἀλλήλων λυττῶντες καὶ ἀκρατῶς τοῖς ὁμοφύλοις μαχόμενοι δειλοὶ καὶ ἀνάλκιδες καὶ πρὸ πολέμου τὰ νῶτα διδόντες φαινόμεθα…The English translation by Lounghis, "The Failure of the German-Byzantine Alliance", p. 198. On internal difficulties in the state cf. Savvides, "Internal Strife and Unrest in Later Byzantium", pp. 237-73.

diminished owing to the fact that it rested on the glorious past, while the present, in spite of the external glamour, revealed an increasingly obvious state weakness:[133] it was Italy, the most advanced country economically at that time, and more specifically the Italian maritime republics, that made it fundamentally possible for the Westerners, Frenchmen, Englishmen and Germans to stay in the East. Towards the East, whether towards the Seljuk sultanate of Ikonium or the Muslim state of Egypt, Byzantine foreign policy was obviously aggressive, using to its advantage the Crusader drive towards the East.[134]

The answer to the question regarding the nature of the oath given by the Crusader lords to the emperor Alexios I Komnenos in 1096 and 1097[135] is that it was an oath of homage which sometimes reached the degree of solemnity equal to the allegiance oath in the feudal West.[136] At the same time, Byzantine political thinking sought to ensure that the West in the East (that is, the newly-founded Crusader states) should recognize Byzantine suzerainty, especially the Crusader states of Antioch and Edessa, that is to say, those regions that had belonged to the empire in the 11th century;[137] in other words, Byzantine political ideology transferred the concept of political suzerainty after the fall of its Italian provinces in 1071 from the West to the East, thus continuing to dominate some regions inhabited by Westerners without entering into hostilities with warriors as mighty as the Crusaders. But safeguarding the traditional imperial universal claims even on a lesser scale, that is, at the level of domination over the small Crusader states, meant the total failure of all attempts to integrate the Latins into Byzantine society. Most of all, the people of Constantinople were against it.

The document in which all subsequent Byzantine claims on Crusader lands appear is the so-called Treaty of Devol, which however has running through it a feeling which hardly conceals the lack of security which was apparently felt by the government of Alexios I, and thus betraying the state impotence to impose its will.[138] It was concluded after a Norman defeat by the imperial forces and a personal meeting between Alexios and Bohemond, prince of Taranto, in September 1108, and its lengthy text has been included by Anna Komnene in her *Alexias*,[139] where the required Byzantine sovereignty as far as

133 Kazhdan/Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture,* pp. 27-31.

134 Lampakis/Leontsini/Lounghis/Vlysidu, *Byzantine Diplomacy,* pp. 57-58.

135 Ferluga, "La ligesse dans l'empire byzantin", p. 175.

136 Runciman, *Crusades* I, pp. 145-68.

137 R.-J. Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusader States 1096-1204*, Oxford 1993.

138 Liubarsky/Freidenberg, "Devol'skii dogovor 1108 g. mezhdu Alekseem Komninom i Boemondom", pp. 260-274.

139 Cf. above, n. 77.

the Euphrates is described, listing the names of all the fortified cities (Antioch, Edessa etc.), fortress-villages, military districts, and large regions such as Cilicia (Little Armenia). In the text mention is made of the 20,000 ounces of gold which the emperor is to pay *each year* to his vassal Bohemond to fulfil his military duties (this annual payment rather crippled the Byzantine superiority in the treaty).[140]

A number of witnesses from both sides signed this document, which was called by Anna Komnene a "written oath" (ἔγγραφος ὅρκος) or, more officially, the "most awe-inspiring oaths" (ὅρκοι φρικωδέστατοι), which however did not provide the slightest guarantee that the rights of the Byzantine emperor, which since the campaigns of John I Tzimiskes had extended as far as Palestine, would be respected. The treaty remained in force under John II Komnenos and Manuel I Komnenos,[141] with only temporary Byzantine successes. The mere truth, it seems, was included in Bohemond's blunt answer to the initially direct Byzantine claims to hand over the fortified city of Antioch:[142] "It is impossible for me to fulfil such a promise" (ἀδυνάτως ἔχω τοιαύτην ὑπόσχεσιν ποιήσασθαι), and the future revealed that he was correct.

Payment to various peoples and on various occasions which usually served as a token of Byzantine might and power, as happened for instance under Alexios I and Bohemond and especially in the days of glory under Manuel I Komnenos, ended under Alexios III Angelos (1195-1203) by "bartering peace by money" (κατένευσε χρημάτων τὴν εἰρήνην ἀνταλλάξασθαι)[143] in order to avoid open war with the German Empire. This political humiliation, which hardly differed from an act of submission, struck a serious blow to the steadiest Byzantine alliance with a tradition dating back many centuries. From this moment onwards, the East Roman Empire started to crumble and became unable to avoid its utter defeat in 1204.[144]

Avoiding war must not be confused with everyone's traditional love of peace. Aside from the cases of Emperors Maurice and Heraclius cited above, the term "peace" (εἰρήνη) rarely occurs in the *Prooimia* of imperial Byzantine documents.[145] The question (found mostly in handbooks of Byzantine Civilization)

140 Cf. Buisson, *Erobererrecht*, pp. 70-81.

141 Cf. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel Komnenos*, pp. 47-50, 52, 66-75, 246-47.

142 Anna Komnene, XIII, 11, 2, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 413. On Bohemond's reasons cf. the sound explanation by Herrin, *Byzantium,* p. 259.

143 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 477.

144 Cf. the collective volumes of Laiou A. (ed.), *Urbs capta: The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences*, Paris 2005 and Moschonas N.G. (ed.), *Η Τέταρτη Σταυροφορία και ο ελληνικός κόσμος,* Athens 2008.

145 Cf. Hunger, *Prooimion*, pp. 32, 54, 170.

of whether the Byzantines avoided war deliberately or, as a genuine military state, tried to avoid it only after their military endeavours were revealed as fruitless or disastrous, should not be examined in this elementary, blunt and absolute manner; as a matter of fact, all these pre-conditions were valid, according to circumstances prevailing each time. There also existed, however, some rules, conditioned each time by the past (as Kazhdan ingeniously wrote[146]); rules which were respected. The government's principle of avoiding war according to reigning circumstances underwent significant changes and was compelled to choose its path from very complicated crossroads: in the early times and up to the third quarter of the 9th century the unity of the Roman world, embracing the whole of the civilized inhabited world, was a priority. This was an aim that had to be sought and preserved by all means, that is, also by an aggressive war or an alliance with a foreign nation of the same faith – the Franks in the aforementioned case.

In this conjuncture, it was rather easy for misunderstandings and even clashes between allies to occur and undermine the alliance, just as happened in Northern Italy between Belisarius and the Frankish king Theudibert of Austrasia (534-548) in 539.[147] The case became more complicated from the third quarter of the 9th century on, when the Macedonian dynasty renounced the old Justinianic pattern of ecumenical domination and adopted the ideology of the "limited ecumene", restricting its territorial claims in the West to Dalmatia and Southern Italy.[148] The clash now took place in Southern Italy between Emperor Louis II of Italy (855-875) and the Byzantine emperor Basil I who sent his forces under admiral Niketas Ooryphas in 869.[149] In both cases mutual discontent of both Christian allies was not enough to provoke open war. Now the renewed alliance with the West prevailed, and the East Roman Empire of "New Rome" faced the urgent need to safeguard something resembling precise boundaries in the West (that is in Dalmatia and Southern Italy) and in the South (that is a maritime boundary south of Crete and Cyprus) but not in the East, where the Byzantines were free to act as they desired. The Danube frontier had to be unchained in the North.

146 Kazhdan/Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture,* p. 166.

147 See Procopius, *On wars*, ed. Wirth/Haury, II 6, 25, 1-23.

148 Cf. Lounghis, "La théorie de l'Oecuménè limitée", pp. 119-122. It goes without saying that the Justinianic ideological superstructure may have survived much longer than its socio-economic infrastructure.

149 *Annales Bertiniani* 869, in *Quellen zur karolingischen Reichsgeschichte. 2. Jahrbücher von St. Bertin*, unter Benutzung der Übers. von J. v. Jasmund und C. Rehdantz neu bearb. von Reinhold Rau, Darmstadt 1983, p. 200. Cf. also Böhmer/Mühlbacher, *Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter den Karolingern*, 1242a, p. 509.

Things were to change again in a most radical way as time went by; "*li Grieu eurent molt grant paour des Latins que il virrent d'aus*" and fled, says Robert of Clary.[150] Here the traditional Byzantine cultural pride was counter-balanced by the incontestable military superiority of the western knights who, according to the valiant Crusader knight Conon of Bethune, considered that this belligerent expedition of 1204 was nothing other than a war between the usurper Alexios III (1195-1203) and the offshoot of the rightful emperor Isaac II overthrown by his younger brother[151] who enjoyed no popularity in Constantinople; the situation changed again in the spring of 1204 after the uprising of Alexios Murzuphlus and the war became unavoidable: "*grant fu la guerre entre les Frans et les Grex*".[152]

Byzantine Diplomacy[153] constitutes a special field both of state activities and modern research, which goes far beyond the problem of alternative means of conflict resolution. For instance, speaking of the imperial Northern frontier, where mostly steppe-peoples appeared and had to be repulsed by the force of arms, war or invasions could not usually be avoided only by diplomatic action.[154] Thus Byzantine diplomacy through the ages flourished in the relations with the East and the West, where crucial political and, above all, subtle and sophisticated ideological and religious matters had to be debated and, if possible, agreed, and that entailed several special treatises.

Si vis pacem, para bellum (if you wish peace, prepare for war). This widespread old dictum once expressed by Publius Flavius Vegetius probably towards the end of the 4th century has proved its value in times when the Byzantine Empire was in an ascending phase.[155] Such was the case for instance under Basil I: while the emperor's lieutenants were busy in the West (in an unspecified period), the Arabs judged that this was a propitious opportunity to attack at sea; on hearing the news, the emperor built numerous triremes and biremes at once and gathered them in Constantinopolitan waters. This seems to have impressed and frightened spies from Syria, and consequently the Arabs abandoned their projected campaign, described by Continuators of Theophanes as

150 Robert of Clary, *La conquête de Constantinople*, p. 18.

151 Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*, p. 145-147.

152 Ibid., 220 = II, p. 24.

153 Cf. above, n. 77 and J. Shepard/S. Franklin (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy. Papers from the Twenty-fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies,* Cambridge, *March 1990*, Aldershot 1992.

154 See most recently Kardaras, *Το Βυζάντιο και οι Άβαροι,* pp. 37-69, 70-102.

155 Cf. however the judgement ascribed by Menander the Guardsman to Peter the Patrician (above, n. 1) during the reign of Justinian, when East Roman armies invaded the West.

"a campaign to be driven against all land and sea subject to the Romans".[156] The situation under Manuel I in 1148[157] was quite different, when 40 Norman galleys operated an unexpected and swift raid against the totally – it seems – unprotected imperial capital and immediately retired after shooting some arrows against the almost invulnerable palace of Blachernae;[158] it seems also that this bold raid remained unpunished.

Thus, and according to the existing evidence, a reasonable conclusion could be that the Byzantine skill for diplomacy throughout the centuries, so exalted by modern scholars, only rarely aimed at avoiding war – at least prior to 1204[159] – and it seems that diplomacy constituted a state tool "in itself", bound to arrange conjunctures in a way which was profitable to the empire before and after events, while the imperial government used various alternative means to avoid armed confrontation only when the latter seemed unavoidable. But speaking on general terms and looking back across the centuries, war conduct was an almost permanent concern for the imperial government, and a genuine imperial ideology[160] only seldom and most reluctantly avoided armed resolution. Such must have been the case for the Byzantine Empire: it fought and yielded in 1204 before more advanced forms of social organization.

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156 Vita Basilii, ed. Ševčenko, p. 234: *κατὰ τῆς ὑποφόρου Ῥωμαίοις γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης ἐκστρατεῦσαι διενοοῦντο.* Cf. also Lounghis, *East Roman Identity*, p. 105.

157 The date is given by Chalandon, *Les Comnène*, p. 331, that is, during or immediately after the Byzantine campaign at Corfu, when the Byzantine fleet, residing at this time almost permanently in Constantinople, was absent.

158 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 99. Cf. also Lounghis, *East Roman Identity*, p. 53.

159 It has been said (Brand, *Byzantium confronts the West,* p. 113) that Choniates is correct when he asserts that the rulers of the last quarter of the 12th century returned prematurely from military campaigns in order to enjoy the pleasures afforded by their palaces along the Sea of Marmara! As a general judgement, it must be wrong.

160 Regarding the period from the 8th to the 10th century, see Koutrakou, *La propagande*, p. 192, n. 730, p. 270, n. 140.

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PART 2

Warfare as Socio-Political Praxis

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CHAPTER 7

Army Structure: Roman Continuity and Byzantine Change

Savvas Kyriakidis

It is inevitable that from the 6th through to the 13th centuries the army of the East Roman Empire underwent significant transformations. These were the consequence of changes in the political, economic and social structures of the empire, as well as of developments in the wider political and military context. Nonetheless, the sources indicate the existence of elements of continuity in the structure of the imperial army. Taking into account the political, military and social developments in the wider Byzantine world, this paper examines the continuities and transformations in the structure of the military forces of the East Roman Empire up to 1204.

The military organization of the Byzantine Empire has attracted insufficient attention in the modern scholarship and is in many respects still an underdeveloped field. Works devoted entirely to the army are rare. As far as the military history of the later Roman Empire up to the 6th century is concerned, most of the conclusions of the work of A.H.M Jones are still valid, although some details require revision. More recently, the monograph published by M.J. Nicasie examines the structure of the late Roman army from the reign of Diocletian until the battle of Adrianople in 378 where the eastern Roman army was crushed by the Goths. The monograph published by H. Elton in 1997 examines the fighting techniques and effectiveness of the late Roman armies in the West from 350 until 425 and includes an analysis of the military structures of the empire. The work published by A.D. Lee in 2007 focuses on the impact and effects of war on the state and society of the later Roman Empire.[1] In addition to these, a significant number of articles published in recent years have contributed significantly to our understanding of the structure and administration of the imperial army.[2] The works of J. Haldon shed important light on the study of the military structures from the 7th to the 12th century. Important

1 Jones, *The Later Roman Empire,* 2, pp. 607-686; Nicasie, *Twilight of empire*; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*; Lee, *War in Late Antiquity*.

2 Lee, "The Army", pp. 211-37; idem, "The Empire at War", pp. 113-33; Elton, "Warfare and the Military", pp. 325-47; idem, "Army and battle in the Age of Justinian", pp. 532-56; M. Whitby, "The Army", pp. 288-314.

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information concerning the evolution of the army in the 10th century can be found in the work of H.-J. Kühn, while the book published by W. Treadgold in 1995 which covers the period from the 3rd to the 11th centuries focuses more on pay and numbers.[3] Important conclusions concerning the Byzantine army in the 12th century can be found in the work of A. Hohlweg, while the monograph published by J. Birkenmeier focuses on tactics and the fighting capabilities of the Comnenian armies.[4]

1 From Constantine to Justinian

The army Constantine commanded when he was proclaimed emperor by the troops of his father, the Tetrarch Constantius I, in 306 was the creation of the reforms of the emperor Diocletian (284-305). Most of army was stationed along the frontiers, while each of the Tetrarchs was in command of a standing field army, the *comitatus*. The establishment of four standing armies enabled the empire to respond simultaneously to threats on four fronts. For instance, in the last years of the 3rd century, Constantius was defending the frontier along the Rhine against the Franks, Maxentius was in Africa, Galerius invaded the Persians through Syria and Diocletian was in Egypt suppressing a revolt.[5]

It has been suggested that during the Tetrarchy the *comitatus* was made up of legions of 5,000 men divided into ten cohorts.[6] Nonetheless, for important operations the field army needed to be reinforced either by detachments drawn from the frontier zones, or by foreign troops, usually referred to as *foederati* or *auxilia*.[7] These were supplied under treaty by tribes in alliance with the empire and served under their own leaders for specific expeditions.[8] In the recent past, the increasing employment of such units of barbarians in the Roman army has been seen as detrimental to the affairs of the empire. It was suggested that it weakened the Roman army to the point of its being unable to

3 Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*; idem, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, pp. 208-54; idem, *Recruitment and Conscription*; idem, "Military Service, Military Lands and the Status of Soldiers", pp. 1-67; idem, *Warfare*; Kühn, *Die byzantinische Armee im 10. Jarhundert*; Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army*.

4 Hohlweg, *Beiträge zur Verwaltungsgeschichte des Oströmischen Reiches unter den Komnenen*; Birkenmeier, *The Development of the Komnenian Army*.

5 Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, p. 608; Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*, pp. 49-64; Elton, "Warfare and the Military", pp. 326-27.

6 Elton, "Warfare and the Military", p. 327.

7 For the *foederati* see Stickler, "The *foederati*", pp. 532-56.

8 Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, pp. 611-12; Elton, "Warfare and the Military", p. 329.

deal effectively with the challenges it had to face in the 3rd and 4th centuries. It was also argued that by adopting the equipment and fighting techniques of the enemy the Roman armies lost the superiority that once had enjoyed over their enemies. This view is receiving increasing criticism since the employment of large numbers of barbarian soldiers had started long before the 4th century and in fact many of these troops proved to be loyal to Rome. The supposed degradation of the quality of the army is not proven by the facts.[9] Moreover, these allied tribes could form a buffer between the empire and its enemies and in some cases the Roman state had established a lose suzerainty over them, conferring upon their leaders titles and privileges.[10] A change in the use and sense of the term *foederati* occurred after the defeat of the emperor Valens at Adrianople at the hands of the Goths in 378, which depleted the imperial army in the east. In the aftermath of the Roman defeat, Theodosius I (379-392) signed a treaty with the Goths giving them lands for habitation within the empire in return for military service. This initiated the use of a new type of federates, which were large ethnic groups who were either homeless or were granted imperial lands for habitation.[11]

Diocletian initiated the separation of the civil and military authority of provinces. The military affairs of a province were administered by a *dux* who was distinct from the provincial governor who retained civil responsibilities only.[12] This reform was a gradual process and many provincial governors continued to be in charge of both the civil and military affairs of the area under their jurisdiction. It seems that Constantine extended this measure and by the end of his reign almost all provinces were administered by a civil official and by a *dux*. Some of the dukes in the frontier zone were in charge of more than one province. For instance the *Notitia Dignitatum* report the presence of a *dux Pannoniae Primae et Norici Ripensis*.[13]

Constantine appears to have carried out his most significant military reforms after his defeat of Licinius in 324, when he prevailed as a sole ruler of the empire. He increased the strength of the field army (*comitatus*) by incorporating into it units from the frontier army and by raising additional cavalry and infantry units. It has been argued that these reforms constitute a significant change from the policy of Diocletian whose aim was to secure the empire by concentrating on the reinforcement of the frontier zones with men and by

9 Stickler, "The *foederati*", pp. 496-99.

10 Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, p. 609.

11 Ibid., pp. 611-12.

12 Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army*, p. 9.

13 *Notitia Dignitatum*, OC I.40.

constructing fortifications.[14] This development led the pagan and hostile to Constantine 5th-century author, Zosimus, to blame the emperor for denuding the frontier zones of soldiers and enabling the barbarians to swarm the empire.[15]

The status of the soldiers of the field army troops, who were called *comitatenses*, was enhanced. They were more prestigious than the soldiers of the frontier armies, the *limitanei* or *ripenses*. The *comitatenses* were required to serve for a shorter period of time than the *limitanei* to secure the benefits of retirement, and they are seen to be troops of a higher quality than the latter. Nonetheless, it has been noted that while the *comitatenses* were mobile troops, there were many examples of soldiers who were based for long periods in one area or a town and who acquired local roots.[16] It was also possible for *limitanei* to be recruited to the *comitatenses*.[17] While the *limitanei* were under the command of the *duces*, the *comitatenses* were placed under the command of two new offices created by Constantine I, the *magister peditum* (master of infantry) and the *magister equitum* (master of cavalry), who were superior to the *duces*. The praetorian perfects retained only administrative duties, the levying of recruits and the provision of arms and supplies.[18] The division of command between cavalry and infantry was not absolute. Both *magistri peditum* and *magistri equitum* commanded infantry and cavalry troops and were often called *magistri militum* (masters of soldiers).[19]

As far as the structure of these units is concerned, The main component of the *comitatenses* were the *vexillationes* (cavalry units of perhaps 500 men) which originally were detachments from various units merged for specific military operations in the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries. In some cases they evolved into permanent units. Under Constantine there were detached cavalry units, the *equites* and newly formed units which were not connected to the old style legions. By the end of the 4th century all these types of unit were called *vexillationes* or in some cases *cunei equitum*. Constantine I established new infantry units, the *auxilia*, which replaced the old cohorts. The limited sources available indicate that cavalry and infantry units in the fashion of the *auxilia* and the *vexillationes* continued to be recruited until the 7th century. Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that there was any significant change in the

14 Man, "Power Force and the Frontiers of the Empire", pp. 180-81.

15 Zosimus, *Historia* ed. Paschoud, 2.34.2

16 Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, p. 209.

17 See the discussion of Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, pp. 20-8. See also the discussion in Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, pp. 99-100; Southern/Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, pp. 23-37.

18 Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, p. 608.

19 Elton, "Warfare and the Military", p. 331.

tactical organization of these units at least until the late 6th century. This indicates a remarkable continuation in the tactical structures of the imperial army despite the changes and fluctuation in the political context.[20]

Furthermore, Constantine I carried out significant changes in the units of the imperial guard. Under the Tetrarchy the emperors were protected by divisions of the praetorian cohorts. Constantine disbanded Maxentius' praetorians after his victory in the Milvian bridge in 312 and Licinius' praetorians after the battle of Chrysopolis in 324, while the fate of his own praetorians is unclear.[21] These disbanded units were replaced by new guard units, the *Scholae Palatinae*, which were regiments of 500 cavalrymen. Under Constantine there were five *Scholae*; the *Primi*, *Secundi* and *Tertii Scutarii*, the *Armaturae* and the *Gentiles*.[22] These units were attached closely to the person of the emperor and were placed under the command of the master of the offices. Nonetheless, no master of the offices is recorded to have commanded them on the field. It is most likely that he was in charge of the administration of these units. Judging by their name, the *Gentiles* should have originally been made up of foreign troops, while by implication the other units were composed predominantly, and perhaps exclusively, of Romans. However, it seems that soon after Constantine's death the bulk of ordinary soldiers and officers in the imperial guard units were Germans and Franks.[23]

The importance of the *scholae* seems to have been reduced when after Theodosius I evolved to parade units rather than fighting units. Leo I (457-474) recruited a new elite unit of 300 men, the so-called *excubitores*, who were originally from Isauria, although by the 6th century they were recruited more widely. They remained active throughout the 6th century and were based in the palace of Constantinople.[24] In the West Theoderic dissolved the *scholae*, while the 6th-century historians Prokopios and Agathias indicate that the *scholae* continued to be part of the campaigning army until the reign of Zeno (474-491).[25]

It seems that there were no radical changes during the reign of Constantine's immediate successors. Following Constantine I's death his sons divided the empire and the field army (*comitatus*) among them.[26] There were armies in

20 Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, p. 610; Haldon, *Warfare*, p. 108.

21 Zosimus, *Historia* ed. Paschoud, 2.17.2.

22 See Frank, *Scholae Palatinae*, pp. 127-42.

23 Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, p. 614 with an examination of the sources.

24 Haldon, *Warfare*, p. 65; idem, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 136-39; Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army*, p. 60.

25 Jones, *The Later Byzantine Army*, p. 614, with a discussion of the sources.

26 Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army*, pp. 10-11.

Gaul (Constantine II), Illyricum (Constans) and the east (Constantius II). When in 353 Constantius ruled alone, he established a central imperial army under the command of two *magistri militum*. In spite of the elimination of his brothers, Constantius did not disband the regional field armies in Gaul, Illyricum and the east, each of which was under a *magister militum*.[27] While the soldiers of the field armies continued to be called *comitatenses*, those who were close to the emperor were called *palatini*. This distinction was not rigid. Palatine units were transferred to the regional armies while often *comitatenses* reinforced the *palatini*.[28]

This system was stabilized in the first decades of the 5th century and survived without significant changes to Junstinian's reign (527-565).[29] The field army in the east was divided into five groups. Two were stationed around the capital. The other three were located in the East, Thrace and Illyricum and continued to be commanded by the *magistri militum*. The frontier armies were commanded by *comites* and *duces*. There was one *comes rei militaris* in Egypt and two *duces* in charge of the frontier troops of the African provinces (Thebaid, Libya). There were seven *duces* along the eastern frontier (Palestine, Arabia, Phoenice, Syria, Osrhoene, Mesopotamia, Armenia) and four along the Danube (Scythia, Dacia, and the two Moesias). Leo I (457-474) increased the number of *duces* to 17 by separating Pontus from Armenia, Euphratensis from Syria, and Pentapolis from Libya, and by the transfer of Panonia Secunda from the west. In the west the bulk of the field army was in Italy under the *magistri praesentales*. There was also a substantial force in Gaul under a *magister equitum* and smaller detachments in Spain, Illyricum, Britain, Tingitania, and Africa under *comites*. There were four *duces* along the upper Danube (Raetia, Valeria, and the Pannonias), five in Gaul (Sequania, Mogontiacum, Germania, Belgica II, Armorica) and a *dux* in Britain. In Africa the *comites* of Africa and Tingitania commanded both garrison and field troops and the *duces* of Mauritania Caesarians and Tripolitana commanded local militia.[30]

2 The Evolution of Military Structures in the Sixth Century

Most of the features of this organizational system remained unchanged in the 6th century and under Justinian (527-565). The fundamental distinction

27 Elton, *Warfare in the Roman World*, pp. 208-210.

28 Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, pp. 608-9.

29 Ibid., p. 609.

30 Ibid., pp. 609-10.

between the mobile armies and the frontier troops (*comitatenses* and *limitanei*) remained. By the end of Justinian's reign there were 25 commands along the frontiers. The distinction between civil and military authority in the provinces remained with a few exceptions, where the *duces* were given civil authority due to internal security issues. For instance, civil and military authority was combined in the provinces of Pisidia, Lycaonia and Isauria in Anatolia.[31]

Furthermore, Justinian maintained the five regional field armies which had existed since the 4th century under the command of the *magistri militum*. Nonetheless, he increased them into six by dividing the army of the East, which was under the command of the *magister militum per Orientem*, into two (one for Armenia, under the *magister militum per Armeniam*, and one for the eastern regions of the south).[32] This seems to reflect the increasing importance of the Caucasus region in the conflict with Persia. Following the re-conquest of territories in the west, *Magistri militum* were placed in Africa, Italy and Spain. The *magistri* of Africa (who were also in charge of Sardinia and Corsica) were effectively general governors of their areas combining civil and military authority.[33]

Moreover, the empire continued to employ large numbers of federates particularly in the east. These could be tribal alliances which received cash, food, and weaponry from the emperor to maintain their loyalty. During the reign of Justinian the defence of the eastern frontier relied heavily on the Ghassanids, who were Christianized Arabs and were faced by a similar tribal confederacy, the Lakhmids, who were subsidized by the Persian kings. It has been noted, however, that the authors of the period began to identify the federates as 'allies' (σύμμαχοι).[34]

Despite these obvious continuities, Justinian carried out some important changes in the military structures of the empire. He introduced the command of *quaestura exercitus* which was equivalent to that of *magister militum*. The *quaestor* had authority over the troops along the Danube frontier (Scythia, Moesia II), the province of Caria in western Asia Minor and the Aegean islands. It seems that the purpose of this development was to secure the supply of the forces in the Danube frontier by sea without pressing the population of the

31 Haldon, *Warfare*, p. 67.

32 Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army*, p. 15.

33 Jones, *The Late Roman Empire*, pp. 655-56; Lee, "The Empire at War", p. 117.

34 Jones, *The Late Roman Empire*, p. 663. For the diplomatic arrangements between the Byzantines and the Arabs see Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*; idem, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*; idem, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*.

frontier districts which were subject to enemy attacks and raids which damaged the local economy.[35]

The 6th century saw the prominent role of the *bucellarioi*. These were military retainers employed by private individuals. The employment of these troops can be traced back in the 4th century and in 476 the throne forbade aristocrats to maintain private armies of armed slaves and *bucellarioi*. However, this practice, though illegal, remained common among magnates. It seems that it gradually became officially approved among military offices. This is shown by the fact that the *bucellarioi* swore an oath of allegiance not only to their employer but to the emperor as well. Therefore, while they were maintained by private military commanders, they were formally placed under the command of the emperor. They also seem to have formed a significant part of the expeditionary forces which their employers commanded. The *Bucellarioi* were recruited from Romans and foreigners alike and those who served in great households had their own commanders and internal organization.[36] Occasionally, their officers could be put in command of regular units. During the reigns of Tiberius Constantine (574-582) and Maurice (582-602) the *bucellarioi* of leading officers were completely incorporated as an elite force into the state establishment and received their pay and provisions as regular troops. Contemporaneous to this reform was the establishment of an elite force, the so-called *optimates* which was initially made up of Gothic and Lombard cavalrymen, although later troops from within the empire were recruited.[37]

3 The Army in the 7th Century

The aforementioned structured remained unchanged until the middle years of the reign of Herakleios (610-641) with some important exceptions. These were the establishment of the exarchates in both Italy, based in Ravenna, and in Africa, based in Carthage.[38] The exarchs were in charge of both the civil and military affairs in the territories they governed. The creation of the exarchate in Italy was the response to the Lombard invasion of Italy in 568 and the establishment of the Lombards in Po valley and in central areas of the Italian

35 Jones, *The Late Roman Empire*, p. 280, with a discussion of the sources; Haldon, *Warfare*, p. 68.

36 Jones, *The Later Roman Empire,* p. 667.

37 Oikonomides, *Listes*, p. 339; Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, p. 211.

38 The first reference to the exarchate of Italy is dated to 584, and for Africa to 591. See Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, p. 211.

peninsula. The aim of the creation of the exarchate of Africa was the reinforcement of the defence against the raids of the Berber tribes.[39]

The intensive warfare between the Persians and the Byzantines under Herakleios prompted further changes in the structure of the army. The two *praesental* armies which were stationed close to the capital seem to have merged. It is likely that the army under the *magister militum per Illyricum* was dissolved as a result of the loss of imperial control over the Balkans due to the attacks of the Slavs and the Avars.[40] Beyond these changes, Herakleios continued and restored, wherever it was necessary, the old traditional structure of command and the division of troops to *limitanei* and *comitatenses*. The available source material indicates that the traditional structure of commands continued until the 640s. Moreover, the armies of the *magistri militum* of the East, Thrace and Armenia continued to exist under Heraklios and took part in the wars against the Arabs in the 630s.

Nevertheless, the 7th century saw deep changes in Byzantine culture and society.[41] By the end of the century the empire had lost Egypt, North Africa, Syria, and Iraq, which had been conquered by the armies of Islam, the vigorous new religion. The Slavs and the Bulgarians reduced the imperial territories in the Balkans to the coastal areas and fortified settlements. In Italy, the exarchate, which was established on the territories re-conquered by Justinian, was dramatically reduced. Meanwhile, new powerful enemies appeared in the place of old ones. The collapse of the Persian kingdom and the establishment of the powerful caliphate, which was centred in Damascus under the Ayubbid dynasty, dramatically shifted the balance of power in the eastern Mediterranean. In the Balkans, the consolidation of the Bulgarian kingdom posed a serious threat to the empire. In the West, the Popes increased their independence from Constantinople and asserted their role as leaders of the Western Church. The changes in the empire were so profound that it has been suggested that "The East Roman empire which we observe at the beginning of the seventh century has, by the time of Leo III (717-741) been transformed into the 'Byzantine' empire of the Middle Ages, and along with its institutions, its social relations and dominant elements of political and popular beliefs".[42]

It is inevitable that these changes had a significant impact on the structure of the Byzantine army. The immediate result of the territorial reduction of the

39 Haldon, *Warfare*, p. 71.

40 Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, p. 211.

41 For a detailed analysis of the cultural, social and economic changes in seventh-century Byzantium see Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*.

42 Ibid., p. 1.

empire was the withdrawal to Anatolia of the field armies from the provinces they operated. The armies which were stationed around the capital were transferred to north-west Asia Minor to the territories that would later be known as the *Obsikion*. This army owes its name to the title of the officer who commanded it during Herakleios' reign (610-641). He was the *comes domesticorum* who was also called *comes Obsequii* and commanded the palatine troops, the *domestici*.[43] The army of the *magister militum per Thracias*, henceforth known by its Greek name *Thrakesion*, was despatched to Anatolia either under Herkaleios or shortly afterwards, to oppose the Arabs and was established in central western Asia Minor.[44] The forces of the *magistri militum per Orientem*, known in Greek as *Anatolikon*, were withdrawn in south eastern Asia Minor and those of the *magister militum per Armeniam* (Armeniakon) occupied the remaining eastern and northern territories of Anatolia. The armies of the East and Armenia were withdrawn in the late 630s as a consequence of the defeat at the hands of the Arabs in Yarmuk in 636. The Balkan territories which were under the *quaestura exercitus*, which was established by Justinian, did not survive the Avar and Slav attacks. However, its southern territories remained under Byzantine control and formed the command of the *Caravisiani*, which seems to have attained its final form in 654.[45] Leo III (717-741) divided this command into the *Kibyrrhaiotai,* Samos and the Aegean Sea and created the fleets of the themes (*thematikoi stoloi*).[46] The exarchate of Africa was eliminated when the Arabs completed the conquest of Africa in 690, while the army of the exarchate of Italy, centred on Ravenna, continued to exist, increasingly fragmented, until the middle of the 8th century when it was eliminated by the Lombards.

It seems that these developments imply a significant change in the military organization of the empire. The linear concept of defence was abandoned and the empire did not make any attempt to construct a fortified frontier zone. Instead, the aim of the imperial armies was either to encounter the enemy in pitched battles or to ambush them after they had entered imperial territory. Inevitably, this meant that many imperial territories were subject to extensive raids and devastation. Eventually, the first half of the 8th century saw the

43 Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, p. 174.

44 It is likely that in 638 the army of the *magister militum per Thracias* was sent to reinforce the Byzantines against the Arabs in Egypt; see Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, p. 173; idem, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, p. 216; Lilie, "Thrakien und Thrakesion", pp. 7-47.

45 Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, p. 217; Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, pp. 22-31. She argues that the *karavissianoi* were established by Constantine IV (668-685).

46 Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, pp. 31, 50-1; Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, p. 217.

establishment of a no man's land in the eastern frontier between the territories which were under Byzantine and Arab control.[47] It has also been noted that the dispersal of soldiers across great tracts of the country was not an effective way of defending Anatolia, although it was useful in protecting local strongholds. This weakness reflects the fiscal priorities of the empire which had suffered an enormous loss of income as a result of the Islamic conquests. The state minimized the cost of maintaining and supplying its troops with provisions by having its soldiers widely dispersed.[48]

4 The Themata

The transfer of the armies to Anatolia is closely associated with the establishment of the *themata*. The meaning and use of the term *thema* has been the subject of a long debate. The problematic nature of the limited source material prevented modern scholars from reaching definite conclusions regarding the dating and nature of the *themata*. Consequently, different, opposing views have been put forward. In the past scholars argued that the term *thema* referred to a province, the military forces of which were commanded by a *strategos* (general) who was in charge of both the civil and military affairs of the territory he was assigned to govern. The prevailing view was that the origins of the themes which appear in the 9th and 10th-century sources could be found in the militarization of the Roman provinces and in the localization of military recruitment following the pattern of the frontier soldiers, the *limitanei*. Prominent scholars attempted to attribute the establishment of the *themata* to specific emperors, namely Justinian, Herakleios and Constans II.[49]

This view has been challenged by scholars who argue for a more gradual evolution of the themes out of the late Roman armies, suggesting that the situation as it is known from the 6th century developed gradually to that known from the 10th century.[50] They dismiss the view that there was a direct institutional connection between the *limitanei* and the thematic system. They also argue that there is no evidence for the creation of a system of recruitment

47 See Haldon/Kennedy, "The Arab-Byzantine frontier in the eighth and ninth centuries", pp. 79-116.

48 Kaegi, "Some Reconsiderations on the Themes", pp. 39-53; Haldon, "Military Service", p. 15.

49 For useful overviews of the history of the debate, see Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 3-11; Zukerman, "Learning from the Enemy", pp. 125-29.

50 Haldon, "Military Service", p. 8; Lilie, "Die zweihundertjährige Reform", pp. 27-39, 190-201.

based from its beginnings on the granting of state lands to soldiers and their families.[51]

Furthermore, it has been argued that the term *thema* referred only to military forces and had no geographical implications. Nonetheless, in the second half of the 7th century the names of the armies withdrawn by Herakleios began to be identified with the territories occupied by the armies, so that the provinces where the armies were stationed came to be referred to by the name of the army. The evidence provided by the 10th-century treatise *De Thematibus*, compiled by Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (912-959), allows an approximate reconstruction of the areas occupied by these armies. The *Opsikion* was based in Hellespontus, Bithynia, Galatia, part of Phrygia Salutaris and Honorias; the *Anatolikon* included parts of Phrygia Salutaris and Phrygia Pacatiana, Galatia Salutaris, Lycaonia, part of Isauria, Pamphylia and Lycia; the *Thrakesion* was based in Lcia, Caria and a small part of Phrygia Pacatiana; the *Armeniakon* included Cappadocia, Armenia, Paphlagonia and Hellespontus.[52]

However, the effect of this development on the administration of the state was limited, since the old provinces continued to exist well into the 8th century.[53] It should not be forgotten that the title *magistri militum* was still in use in 662. Moreover, documentary evidence shows that in the 680s units called – rather anachronistically – *themata* were under the command of the *magistri militum*.[54] This continuity between the 6th and the 7th-century military structures is emphasized in the recent studies by Zuckerman, and Cheynet, who bases his argument on the examination of sigillographic evidence. However, they place the establishment of the military districts in the early 8th century. They conclude that the pressure the empire faced in the last years of the 7th century prompted the establishment of a large number of military commands. This development led to the creation of military districts throughout the empire. According to Zuckerman, these districts should be identified as *strategiai* and not *themata*. The *themata* which appear later originate in the *strategiai*.[55]

51 See Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion*, pp. 287-321; Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 164-74.

52 *Costantino Porfirogenito*, *De Thematibus*, ed. A. Pertusi (Studi e Testi, 160), Vatican 1952; Haldon, *Seventh Century*, pp. 219-20.

53 Haldon, "Military Service", p. 8.

54 Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, pp. 213-15.

55 See Zuckerman, "Learning from the Enemy", pp. 125-134; Cheynet, "La mise en place des themes", pp. 1-13.

5 The Evolution of Military Structures (8th-10th Centuries)

According to the latest theory, the establishment of *themata* as military and administrative units governed by a *strategos* should rather be regarded as the outcome of a reform by emperor Nikephoros I (802-811).[56] In the course of the 9th century their number increased and they represented a new military organization which replaced the late Roman structures. For military purposes the *themata* were divided into *tourmai*, each consisting of a number of *drouggoi* which were made up of *banda*. Each *tourma* was based in a fortified city or fortress and each *bandon* was based in a clearly defined district. Unlike the *banda* and the *tourmai*, the *drouggoi* remained a purely tactical unit and were never linked to a region.[57]

According to the late 9th or early 10th century military treatise entitled the *Tactica* of Leo VI, each *thema* consisted of three *tourmai*; each *tourma* was subdivided into three *drouggoi* and each *drouggos* consisted of a number of *banda*.[58] Nonetheless, the themes consisted of various numbers of *tourmai* in different times and the numbers in each *bandon* varied. Some sources state that they were from 50 to 200 and the *Tactica* from 200 to 400.[59] Each *thema* was governed by a *strategos* (general) who by the second half of the 9th century was in charge of both the civil and military affairs of the province.[60] Nonetheless, the civilian officials and their functions were supervised by the central government in Constantinople.

The *strategos* had his own guard unit and was in charge of a staff of clerical officials in addition to the military officers of his command. The *tourmarches* was in charge of the important fortress and strongholds in the area of his jurisdiction. He was also responsible for the safety of the local population and for dealing with the enemy raids.[61] The *tourmarches* is presented by the sources as a commander of cavalry units and his office was immediately below the *strategos* and was the equivalent of the old *dux* who was below the *magister militium*. The *drouggarios* was a commander of cavalry *banda* under their *comites*.[62] It should be added that the commanders of the regional fleets held the

56 Brubaker/Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, pp. 723-755, esp. 744 f.; Haldon, "A context for two "evil deeds": Nikephoros I and the origins of the themata", pp. 245-266.

57 Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, p. 113.

58 *Leo VI Tactica*, IV 8-11, ed. Dennis, pp. 50-52.

59 Ibid., IV 43, ed. Dennis, pp. 58-60; Haldon, *Warfare*, p. 114.

60 Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 8-9.

61 Haldon/Kennedy, "The Arab-Byzantine Frontier", p. 104.

62 *Leo VI Tactica*, IV 2-6, 10-32, ed. Dennis, pp. 46-48, 50-54. The *Tactica* repeats with minor

office of *drouggarios* and the *drouggarios* of Constantinople was the supreme head of the imperial fleet.[63]

It is interesting that despite these profound changes in the military structures of the empire, there were units which maintained late Roman identities. 10th-century sources refer to the *tourmai* of the Theodosiaci and Victores, which were originally established in the 4th and 5th centuries, of the theme of *Thrakesion*. Similarly the sources mention the *Optimates* and *Bucellarii* in northwest Asia Minor and the *foederati* in the *Anatolikon*.[64] However, it is impossible to assess the extent to which these units reflect a late Roman continuity since nothing is known about their internal organization.[65] Nevertheless, by the 10th century it is almost impossible to identify late Roman regimental names and identities mainly because of the gradual regionalization of the field armies which were established on a permanent basis in various districts. In addition, the soldiers who made up the *banda* were local recruits. Therefore, each unit was identified with the district where it was stationed and its inhabitants. The localized character of the army is reflected in the statement of the *Tactica* of Leo VI that cohesion should be attained by keeping soldiers from the same communities and districts together, thus reinforcing local identities and solidarities.[66]

Moreover, an important constraint in any attempt to understand the continuity of military structures is the inconsistent terminology used by the authors of the period. For instance, a 9th-century saint's life reports that the basic divisions of the thematic armies were led by officers who commanded 1,000, 100 and 50 men (*chiliarchai*, *hekatontarchai*, *pentekontarchai*). It is impossible to determine whether these were official terms, or archaic terms employed in a rhetorical context by a biographer who was not a military man. They could also reflect the lack of a rigid terminology regarding the military offices and titles of the army.[67] Therefore, the continuous appearance of military titles which were established in the 3rd and 4th centuries may indicate the tendency of literate authors to avoid using contemporary terminology. It also shows the fact that well into the 9th century there was no established and uniform use of military titles. In a similar manner, the *Tactica* of Leo indicate that the terms

essentials the information provided by the *Strategikon* of Maurice: Maurice, *Strategikon*, ed. Dennis, I 3-4.

63 Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, pp. 73-81, 97-102.

64 Oikonomides, *Listes*, p. 343.

65 Haldon, "Administrative Continuities", pp. 10-16; idem, *Warfare*, p. 112.

66 *Leo VI Tactica*, IV 40-41, ed. Dennis, p. 58.

67 Haldon, *Warfare*, p. 111.

chiliarchia and *drouggos* were used interchangeably.[68] This obvious absence of rigid terminology implies the continuous existence of units, the origins of which can be found before and after the early 4th century.

Furthermore, the command structures provided by the late 6th or early 7th-century military treatise known as the *Strategikon* of the emperor Maurice (582-602) is, with a few minor replacements, adopted by the *Tactica* of Leo VI. The subdivisions of command are repeated by the *Tactica* and the changes reflect the Late Roman terminology for offices in the Greek form, and not any major change in the tactical organization of the army. Similarly, Arab authors provide descriptions of the structure of the Byzantine army, which although they may vary in details, such as the size of units, confirm the Byzantine sources.[69]

A significant change that occurred in the thematic system was the establishment of the so-called *kleisourarchiai* (commands of frontier passes). It is likely that they already existed in the second half of the 8th century.[70] These were independent military commands established in the frontiers and were based on districts that had been detached from the *themata*. The establishment of the *kleisourai* is the response of the Byzantine government to the needs of the continuous small-scale warfare against the Arabs in the eastern frontier and shows the need for a greater local autonomy in order to deal with the enemy raids. The defence relied on ambushes and the harassment of the enemy while direct confrontations were avoided. The aim was to make raiding riskier for the enemies who would not be certain that they would succeed in capturing considerable booty. The first *kleisourai* were formed from *tourmai* of the themes and covered the frontier passes and the regions which were immediately threatened by the enemy.[71]

In the 10th century the *kleisourai* were enhanced into the status of *themata*. However, they were much smaller than the older *themata*. They centred on a particular fortress and not on a wider territory. These new *themata* were placed under officers who are often called "lesser" (*mikroi*) *strategoi*. Along the eastern frontier these new themes were called "frontier" "*akritika*" or "Armenian" themes, because they were established on territories where Armenians made up a large part of the population. In this manner they were differentiated from the older "great" or "Roman" themes based in the interior.[72] Armenian settlers

68 Leo VI Tactica, IV 44, ed. Dennis, p. 128.

69 See Haldon, *Warfare*, pp. 109-11 with an analysis of the sources.

70 Ibid., p. 79.

71 Ibid., p. 114; Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion*, pp. 302-6.

72 Haldon, *Warfare*, p. 84.

were the majority of the heterogeneous population settled in these regions and provided the army with a ready source of soldiers whose proximity to the frontier ensured their rapid mobilization. They received small plots to support their military service as foot soldiers. It is worth noting that the author of the military treatise entitled *praecepta militaria* which is attributed to Nikephoras Phokas recommends the selection of Armenians as heavy infantrymen.[73]

The new themes were grouped into larger commands, which were under the command of a *doux* or a *katepano*. These were independent of the local provincial administration and were given authority over the "lesser" generals across whose regions their military authority was granted. By the 970s the ducats of Chaldia, Mesopotamia, and Antioch were established and in the first decades of the 11th century the ducates of Iberia, Vaspurakan, Edessa, and Ani were added. In the west, the expansion of the frontier in the Balkans resulted in the establishment of the ducate of Adrianople and Thessalonica and after the annexation of the kingdom of Bulgaria by Basil II (976-1025), the establishment of the ducates of Sirmion, Paristrion, Bulgaria.[74]

Another important reform which had a significant impact on the organization of the army concerns the properties which were attached to military service. It seems that until the 10th century there was no legal connection between the possession of land and military service for the soldiers of the *themata*. Nonetheless, gradually the state began to view the possession of land as a prerequisite for the recruitment to the provincial armies and in the first half of the 10th century the state decided to classify these possessions and to formalize the conditions under which they could be held or transferred by registering them.[75] Between 945 and 959 Constantine VII issued a novel which imposed certain conditions regulating the military service and the lands which were attached to it. The minimum value of military properties supporting military service was fixed at four pounds of gold for cavalrymen and two pounds of gold for sailors. Moreover, the military lands were to be registered on the military rolls and would be transmitted to the family or named inheritors of their holders. The aim of these reforms was to stabilize the military resources of the empire which would secure the continuation of a successful expansionist military policy.[76] Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969) extended these measures.

73 *Praecepta militaria*, ed. McGeer, I 1-3; McGeer, "The Legal Decree of Nikephoros II Phokas", pp. 123-37; Kühn, *Armee*, pp. 61-6.

74 Kühn, *Armee*, pp. 165-68; Oikonomides, *Listes*, pp. 354-63; Haldon, *Warfare*, pp. 86-9 with a table which illustrates the evolution of this system.

75 Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, pp. 41-65; id. "Military Service", pp. 27-8.

76 See Lemerle, *The Agrarian History of Byzantium*, pp. 116-25.

In a well-known passage the 12th-century historian Zonaras comments that Nikephoros II did everything to register the lands of his subjects and extract from them the highest level of military service they could support. He also increased, through legislation the value of the military properties from four to twelve pounds of gold.[77]

These changes indicate that the state preferred military revenues to personal military service and, most importantly, they reflect the increased reliance on mercenaries and professional soldiers, many of whom were recruited from outside the empire. The multi-ethnic character of the Byzantine army is pointed out by mid-10th-century Arab authors who mention the presence of Slavs, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Chazars and possibly Georgians in the Byzantine army.[78] Similarly, discussing the formation and armament of infantry soldiers, the military treatise entitled *Campaign Organization and Tactics* mentions the presence of *Rhos* and other foreigners in the army.[79]

These changes in the structure of the army reflect the transition from a defensive to an offensive and expansionist military policy which was initiated during the reign of Constantine VII. The cavalry units of the *themata* were mostly light-armed and most of the infantrymen were used as garrisons of frontier fortresses. These troops were effective when used either to conduct raids on enemy territory or to defend against enemy raids. However, the implementation of an offensive policy demanded the deployment of mobile and better equipped and better trained forces which were provided by the professional soldiers of the *tagmata*. The first *tagmata* were created by Constantine V (741-775) in the first years of his reign and were a small elite force.[80] These units received higher incomes than the soldiers of the *themata*, were more disciplined, and better trained. They evolved to become the central and most effective part of the Byzantine campaigning armies.[81] By the middle of the 10th century there were four *tagmata*. The *scholai* had their origins in the reforms of Constantine. The *excubitores* originate from the guard unit created by Leo I. The *vigla* was created by the empress Theodora in the 780s and the *Hikanatoi* were established by Nikephoros I (802-811) in 810. A fifth *tagma*, the *Athanatoi* (Immortals) was established by John I Tzimiskes (969-976) in 970.[82]

77 Ibid., pp. 128-31.

78 McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's teeth*, p. 201 with a discussion of the sources.

79 *Campaign Organization and Tactics*, ed. Dennis, pp. 280, 294, 312.

80 Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army*, p. 28. On the history of the *tagmata* see Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*; Kühn, *Die byzantinische Armee*.

81 Haldon, *Warfare*, p. 84.

82 This *tagma* disappeared from the sources and reappeared under Michael VII Doukas (1071-1078). See Oikonomides, *Listes*, pp. 332-3.

Until the middle of the 10th century the *tagmata* were stationed inside or around Constantinople. However, by the middle of the 10th century detachments of these units were transferred to the frontiers. They were placed under the authority of a *dux* or a *katepano* who were in charge not only of the *tagmata* stationed in his district but also of the "lesser" *strategoi* in the frontier themes.[83]

The examination of the origins and the structure of the *tagmata* reveal continuities. The *vigla*, which was initially called *arithmos*, was probably a unit of various *banda* from the *themata* and was upgraded to a *tagma* by Eirene. It seems that it was a cavalry *vexillatio* before it was despatched to Thrace or Asia Minor as a result of the Arab conquests in the 630s. Similarly, its internal organization and hierarchy, such as the ranks of *komites* and *kentarcai*, can be traced back to the 5th and 6th centuries.[84]

An important effect of the increasing importance of the *tagmata* was the centralization of military command. With the exception of the *vigla* the *tagmata* were commanded by *domestikoi*. The *domestikos* of the schools was the senior among them and he evolved to be the supreme commander of the army after the emperor. During the reign of Romanos II (959-963) the command of the *domestikos* was divided into two. The *domestikos* of the Schools of the east was in charge of the armies on Asia Minor, and his counterpart the *domestikos* of the Schools of the west was in charge of the military forces in the European parts of the empire. The second officer in command was the *protostrator* who from the middle of the 8th century was the head of the imperial esquires or mounted attendants of the emperor.[85] In 967 for the first time appear the offices of the *stratopedarches* of the east and the west.[86] In a similar fashion, the command of the military fleet of the empire was centralized under a central bureau in Constantinople and any distinction between local, provincial and imperial naval forces was abolished.[87]

While the *tagmata* spearheaded the campaigns that led to the expansion of the empire in the 10th century, there are indications that the armies of the *themata* declined in terms of size. The *Tactica* of Leo and the military treatise *On skirmishing warfare*, written probably in the 960s, relate that it was necessary

83 Oikonomides, "L'evolution de l'organization administrative", pp. 148-50; idem, *Listes*, pp. 344-45; Cheynet, "Du stratége de thème au duc", pp. 181-94.

84 See Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 228-42, 256-97.

85 Oikonomides, *Listes*, pp. 337-8; Hohlweg, *Beiträge*, pp. 59, 111-17.

86 Ahrweiler, "Recherches sur l'administration de l'empire byzantin", pp. 52-67; Oikonomides, "L'evolution de l'organization administrative", pp. 141-2, 145; idem, *Listes,* pp. 329, 334-5.

87 Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, p. 171.

to put together troops from several *tourmai* and *themata* to create a substantial force for aggressive military operations. A consequence of the decline of the *banda* was the merging of the duties of the *komites* in charge of the *banda* and the *drouggarioi* in charge of the *drouggos*. As a result the office of *drouggarokomes* emerged. This suggests that there was a little difference between the old *bandon* of 200-400 men and the reduced *drouggos*, and that the size of the *tourmai* was also reduced.[88]

The restructuring of the army is reflected in changes in technical terminology. By the middle of the 10th century most Latin technical terms to refer to military units and ranks were supplemented by a range of new Greek terms. For instance, while in the past the terms *drouggarios* and *chiliarches* referred to the same position, in the 960s the office of *taxiarches* appears in a military treatise attributed to the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas. He was the commander of a unit of 1,000 infantrymen. The terms *taxiarches* and *taxiarchiai* are used interchangeably with the terms *chiliarchia* and *chilarches*.[89] The office of *archegetes* or *hoplitarches* is first mentioned in an anonymous military treatise as the head of the entire infantry on campaign.[90] These new offices reflect the increasing importance of heavy infantry in the Byzantine army, a development which is compatible with the adoption of an aggressive military strategy. Indeed, the *praecepta militaria* indicates that the heavy infantry were the single largest body of the campaigning army. In his description of a military campaign the author of this treatise prescribes a figure of 11,200 heavy infantrymen of which the 12 *taxiarchies* would include 6,000 including the heavy spearmen (*menavlatoi*).[91] In a similar manner, the placement of detachments of *tagmata* on the frontier zones reflects the increasing importance of heavy cavalry. The use of the heavily armed cavalrymen, by the armies of Sassanid Persia, had led late Roman rulers to create heavy cavalry units, the so-called *clibanarioi*. 10th-century authors indicate the revival of heavy cavalrymen known as the *kataphraktoi*. Arab authors remark that the Byzantine armies included cavalrymen "who advanced on horses which seemed to have no legs", and wore "helmets and garments which were of iron like their swords". The *praecepta militaria* describe in detail the armament and formation of these heavy cavalrymen who belonged to the *tagmata*. Nonetheless, this military

88 Oikonomides, "The Social Structure of the Byzantine Countryside", pp. 105-125; Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, pp. 115-16.

89 *Praecepta militaria*, ed. McGeer, I. 41; McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, p. 203; Oikonomides, *Listes*, pp. 335-6.

90 *Campaign Organization*, ed. Dennis, pp. 265-56; Oikonomides, *Listes*, p. 335.

91 McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, pp. 203-6.

treatise indicates that these elite troops made up a small portion of the military forces of the empire. The formation suggested by the *praecepta militaria* required 504 *kataphraktoi* 150 of whom were to be mounted archers. It has been calculated that these soldiers did not exceed five per cent of the army's strength.[92]

Moreover, the 9th and 10th centuries saw changes in the palace guard units. The *hetaireia* appeared for the first time under the reign of Leo V (813-820) and was composed of various units which were also called *hetaireiai*. Under Leo VI and until the middle of the 10th century there were three *hetaireiai*. These were the great (composed of Macedonians), the middle (composed of foreigners), and the third which was made up of Pharganoi, who were Turks from central Asia and Chazars. The sources indicate the appearance of a fourth *hetaireia* which was composed of infantry soldiers, possibly Rus.[93]

6 From the 11th Century to 1204

The military successes of a series of 10th-century emperors and of Basil II (976-1025), as well as the annexation of large territories in northern Syria, northwest Iraq and in the Balkans left the empire exposed to new threats. The commands of the *ducates* and *katepanata* were designated to correspond to the needs of an aggressive military policy and they represented a localized and fragmented system of defence. This system could respond effectively to small-scale local attacks but not to the major threats posed by the new enemies of the empire, the Petchenegs, the Seljuqs and the Normans. Meanwhile, 11th century rulers seem to have ignored the old thematic forces. Instead, the defence of the empire relied largely on successful diplomacy and on the establishment of buffer states and regions around the empire's frontiers. Moreover, the throne and the elite in the capital were suspicious of the growth of provincial retinues which were patronized by the local commanders who were also local magnates.[94]

Consequently, the traditional thematic armies had effectively disappeared as a result of the government's policies during the period *c*. 1030-1060. This is reflected in the terminology used by the authors of the period to describe campaigning armies. While foreign mercenaries are described according to their

92 McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, pp. 214-17.

93 Oikonomides, *Listes*, p. 327.

94 McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, pp. 221-22; Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic *oikos*", pp. 92-111; Haldon, "Military Service", p. 48.

ethnicity, the native Byzantine troops are identified mainly by their province of origin such as "Macedonians", or "Paphlagonians". For instance in their account of the rebellion of Isaac Komnenos in 1057 the sources refer to *tagmata* of the themes of Charsianon, Chaldia, Armeniakon, and Macedonia. There is no reference to *themata*.[95]

Furthermore, the 11th century saw the start of the massive reliance on mercenaries, many of whom were recruited from outside the empire and fought under their own leaders. Most of them were Western European knights, Normans, Germans and Franks. It was in the 11th century that Byzantine authors started to use the term *misthophoros* (mercenary) to identify soldiers for hire. It seems that the recruitment of foreign soldiers became more intense under the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055), who abolished the thematic armies of Iberia.[96]

As is the case with the federates in the late Roman period, mercenaries have often been associated by modern scholars with the collapse of the empire's defences in the middle of the 11th century and with political and military failures. They have been viewed as less reliable and less loyal than the native thematic troops. This view relies on the assumptions that all mercenaries are foreigners and that the Byzantine army before the 11th century was a "national" army.[97] Nevertheless, in a significant number of modern studies, the recruitment of mercenaries has stopped being seen as a bad thing. It has been stated that the extensive employment of foreign mercenaries in the 11th century was not a mistake but a response to a changing strategic context when the empire moved from a defensive to an offensive strategy and full-time and well-trained soldiers were better suited for its implementation.[98] Well-trained bands of mercenaries provided better service to the empire than did the local militia of the *themata*.

Moreover, mercenaries who received their remuneration in cash enabled the government to acquire a greater control over its military forces. Mercenaries were more dependent on their paymasters than were the provincial soldiers who had developed strong local identities and were prone to get involved in revolts and politics since they could support the revolts of provincial magnates

95 Haldon, *Warfare*, p. 119; Scylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, pp. 484, 488, 490, 491, 492.

96 Shepard, "The Uses of the Franks in Eleventh-Century Byzantium", p. 281; Oikonomides, "L'organisation adminstrative", p. 144.

97 Charanis, "The Byzantine Empire in the Eleventh Century", p. 204; Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor*, pp. 75, 91; Karayannopoulos, *Το Βυζαντινό κράτος,* p. 528; Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army*, p. 219.

98 Haldon, *Warfare*, pp. 92-3.

against the throne. For instance, to reduce the influence of the provincial military elite and crush the rebellion of Bardas Skleros, Basil II relied on 6,000 *Rhos* who were sent by Vladimir of Kiev and evolved into the Varangian guard, the soldiers of which established a reputation for their loyalty to the throne until the very end of the empire.[99] Moreover, by the end of the 11th century, Norman mercenaries had established a reputation in Byzantium as being the only warriors capable of taking on the Seljuqs and winning. In the aftermath of the battle of Mantzikert (1071), foreign military leaders, such as Roussel of Bailleul, enjoyed great popularity by being able to provide a degree of security to the local population on the eastern frontier.[100]

An important question that needs to be discussed is the extent to which the employment of foreign mercenaries in the 11th century is a break from the past. As has been seen above, foreign soldiers were part of the later Roman armies. Furthermore, the armies of the *tagmata*, which were established in the 8th century, were maintained through salaries paid by the state. Therefore, they were in effect mercenaries. However, unlike the typical mercenary, who offers his services to the highest bidder among many potential employers and has no ties to the society of the state he serves, the soldiers of the *tagmata* were permanent residents of the empire. They had a stake in the well-being of the Byzantines and they cannot be seen as unreliable soldiers of fortune. However, this does not imply that salaries were the exclusive motivation for the foreign mercenaries employed by the Byzantine state. For instance Frankish commanders, who figure prominently in the sources of the second half of the 11th century, possessed titles and properties in Byzantium.[101] By granting titles and land to mercenaries the Byzantine emperors created a bond between the mercenaries and the land, providing them with an extra incentive to remain under their service. In addition, by receiving court titles mercenary leaders became members of the nobility and acquired ties with the Byzantine society.

The army Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118) found when he took over the throne relied on 11th century structures. However, military failures in the early years of his reign resulted in significant changes in the structure of elite units,

99 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 336. The Varangians evolved to be one of the most important elite guard units of the empire. See Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*.

100 See Shepard, "The Uses of the Franks", pp. 300-2; Magdalino, *The Byzantine Background to the First Crusade*, pp. 11-13, 29-35.

101 Hervé received the title of *vestes* and revolted against Michael VI (1056-1057) when he was refused the title of *magistros* and seems to have possessed an estate in the province. Robert Crispin and Roussel of Bailleul held estates in *Armeniakon* in the 1070s: Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. I. Perez Martin, Madrid 2002, pp. 93-95, 147; Shepard, "Uses of the Franks", pp. 287-8, 296-301; Magdalino, *The Byzantine Background to the First Crusade*, pp. 10-11.

which formed the core of the Byzantine army. The Varangians, who since the reign of Basil II formed one of the most important elite units of the Byzantine army, continued to take part in major military operations. However, by the time the Varangians were crushed by the Normans in Dyrrachion in 1081 the ethnic composition of this unit had changed significantly as a result of the introduction of a substantial number of Anglo-Saxon soldiers.[102] In addition, the Varangians were supplemented by the Immortals, who had been created by John I Tzimiskes in the previous century. During the conflict with the Normans, Alexios I created the *archontopouloi*, who were 2,000 sons of soldiers who had died in battle. It is likely that despite being an elite unit the *archontopouloi* had the means to arm themselves, thus saving the state a considerable amount of money. However, the *archontopouloi* disappear from the sources after the conflicts with the Petchenegs in the 1090s.[103] Similarly, the *opsikianoi* and the *vigla/arithmos* disappear from the sources during Alexios I's reign, while the *exkoubitai* disappeared after the defeat of Alexios I at the hands of the Normans in Dyrrachion.[104]

The divisions of indigenous units were identified with the region in which they were based. The soldiers were identified as "Macedonians", "Thracians", or '"Thessalians". The sources present these units in the context of military campaigns and do not mention them as defenders of fortresses or territories. They were called whenever the emperor needed to assemble a campaigning army. The limited available source material prevents us from understanding the internal organization of these units. Nonetheless, the old thematic structures were obsolete and it is anachronistic to view these units as similar to the old armies of the *themes*. These were supplemented by the Petcenegs who were defeated by Alexios I in 1091 and a large number of contingents of mercenaries and auxiliaries, such as the 500 Flemish knights sent by count Robert of Flanders, and various bands of Western European mercenaries (Germans, Normans, Franks) and Turks.[105]

John II (1118-1143) and Manuel I (1143-1180) did not restore the units which had disappeared during Alexios I's reign. The units of "Macedonians", "Thracians", and "Thessalians" continued to be mentioned by the sources throughout this

102 Blöndal, *The Varangians in Byzantium*, p. 14; Benedikz, "The Origin and Development of the Varangian Regiment in the Byzantine Army", pp. 23-4; Cigaar, "L'émigration anglais a Byzance après 1066", p. 305; Sheppard, "The English and Byzantium", pp. 53-92.

103 Birkenmeier, *Komnenian Army*, pp. 157, 159.

104 For the evolution of the *tagmata* see Kühn, *Armee*, pp. 243-59; Oikonomides, "L'organisation administrative", p. 143.

105 Hohlweg, *Beiträge*, pp. 64-80; Birkenmeier, *Komnenian Army*, pp. 157-8; Haldon, *Warfare*, pp. 93-4.

period and it seems that throughout the 12th century these areas were the main source of native soldiers. The elite *tagmata* which disappeared during Alexios I's reign (*Athanatoi*, *Excubitai, Vigla*, *Archontopouloi*) were replaced by foreign mercenaries who are referred to by the sources as *tagmata*. However, by the early 12th century all units of the Byzantine army, regardless of number, origin and precise function were called *tagmata*.[106] In addition, like Alexios I who had settled Pecheneg prisoners of war, and who reinforced the Byzantine army in the province of Moglena, John II settled Serbian prisoners in Nikomedia, enrolling some of them in the army, while after their definite defeat in 1122 in Beroe (Stara Zagora) many Petcehenegs registered in the Byzantine military lists.[107]

Foreign mercenaries were the core of the 12th-century Byzantine army and it is probable that most of the soldiers of John II and Manuel I were of similar ethnic origin to those mentioned in the exemptions Alexios I granted monasteries Rhos, Varagians, Koulpigoi, English, Franks, Nemitzoi, Bulgarians, and Saracens.[108] The recruitment of foreign mercenaries seems to have increased under Manuel I. His invasion of Italy in 1156 relied almost exclusively on mercenaries. The general Michael Palaiologos was sent to Italy with a substantial force and a large amount of money to recruit mercenaries locally. Shortly afterwards, the *protostrator* Alexios Komnenos was sent to south Italy and began to recruit cavalrymen from Calabria.[109] Choniates reports that for his campaign against Iconium in 1176 the emperor recruited a large number of foreign soldiers, mainly Western Europeans and Cumans.[110]

Although the massive employment of foreign mercenaries changed the character of the Byzantine army, the Comnenian rulers retained most of the 11th-century command structure. The *domestikoi* of the east and the west continued to be the supreme heads of the army assisted by the *protostratores*. An important development was the creation of the office of *megas doux* which appears during the reign of Alexios I. Its holder was the commander-in-chief of the fleet.[111] The use of the term *megas* (great) *domestikos* and the addition of the epithet *megas* before most military offices do not reflect any real adminis-

106 Bartusis, *Late Byzantine Army,* p. 29; Birkenmeier, *Komnenian Army*, p. 160. It is likely that the *athanatoi*, the *hikanatoi* and the *vigla* disappear after the reign of Basil II. See Oikonomides, "L'organisation administrative", p. 145.

107 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 16; Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meinecke, p. 8.

108 *Actes de Lavra, prmière partie, des origins à 1204*, eds. P. Lemerle/N. Svoronos/ A. Guillou/ D. Papachrysanthou (Archives de l'Athos), Paris, 1970, pp. 243, 258.

109 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, pp. 91-7; Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meinecke, p. 170.

110 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 178.

111 Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, pp. 209-10.

trative change.[112] One of the most important reforms of the emperors of the Comnenian dynasty regarding the structure of the army was the monopoly of military commands by relatives and clients of the imperial family who had their own retinues. Provincial military commands were given only to close relatives and associates, while the distinction of provincial and central government was blurred by the appointment of officials in both. In addition, it was possible for a single commander to be the governor of more than one province.[113] This change is closely related to the changes Alexios I implemented in the structures of the government of the empire. The ruling family, in association with the family of Doukas, became the centre of a new aristocracy in which wealth, status and military command depended on kinship to the emperor.

Moreover, the Komnennoi seem to have attempted to restore the connection between landholding and military service by introducing the institution of *pronoia* by which state revenues from a district were granted to an individual or group of individuals in return for the provision of soldiers. Although there is evidence suggesting that this practice began long before his accession, the beginning of the extensive use of *pronoiai* is attributed to Manuel I. This conclusion relies on a well-known text of the *History* of Choniates, in which the author condemns Manuel I's measures concerning the army.[114] *Pronoia* grants were advantageous to the state, since they could strengthen the ties between the soldiers and the Byzantine society by providing them with a stake in the empire. In addition, the state was relieved of the cost of collecting taxes to pay cash to its troops.[115]

The gradual recovery of western Asia Minor which started in the 1090s enabled Alexios I to establish a series of *ducates* and *katepanata* which concentrated on a city, such as Abydos and Smyrna. Moreover, he installed a number of *kastrophylakes*, who appeared for the first time in 1078 and replaced the *paraphylakes* as heads of the garrisons of fortresses along the frontier.[116] Alexios I's successor, John II, established new *themata*. He re-established a *thema* of Thrakesion, which was smaller than its predecessor and the *thema* of Mylassa-Melanoudion which was situated in the areas that used to belong to the old *themata* of Kibyrrhaiotai and the old Thrakesion. Manuel I established

112 Oikonomides, "L'organisation administrative", p. 143.

113 Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, p. 266.

114 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, pp. 208-209; For the most recent and thorough analysis of the text see Bartusis, *Land and Privilege in Byzantium*, pp .64-5, 87-97.

115 See Bartusis, *Land and Privilege in Byzantium*, p. 95.

116 Oikonomides, "L'organisation administrative", p. 148.

the theme of Neokastra in north western Asia Minor. By the end of his reign more *themata* were established. The sources indicate that the commanders of the armies that were stationed in these provinces were called *doukes* and were also the governors of these regions. It seems that these developments and the construction and garrison of fortifications contributed to the successful defence of the recovered parts of Asia Minor against the Seljuk sultanate of Rum and the Danishmendid chieftains, and enabled Manuel I to consider the recovery of Cappadocia.[117] The plans for an expansion at the expense of the Seljuks never materialized. However, the regions of Neokastra, Thrakesion and Mylassa-Melanoudion would become the most important sources of manpower for the armies of the so-called empire of Nicaea which was established in western Asia Minor after the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204.

6 Conclusions

The military administration of the Byzantine Empire remained centralized up to the 12th century,. Throughout this period the central government controlled the maintenance of the army and its military structures were more advanced than those of its enemies. This was a reality even well into the 12th century, when the army was dominated by non-Byzantine mercenary troops. Nonetheless, it was inevitable that changes in the broader cultural, political and military context had a considerable impact on the structure of the Byzantine army. The 7th century is viewed as a period of profound transformations in the culture and organization of the Byzantine empire. The Islamic conquests and the territorial loses in the Balkans forced the empire to change its military strategy and organization. Nonetheless, the new structures relied on old ones. The establishment of the *themata* was an innovation, although the thematic armies were based on the old armies of the *magistri militum*. It was inevitable that at the end of the 7th century these armies became known by their Greek name.

The main constraint in any attempt to examine the continuities of military structures is the lack of sufficient sources. As has been mentioned, 10th-century sources refer to *tourmai*, such as the *Theodosiaci* and *Victores* which were originally established in the 4th and 5th centuries. However, it is impossible to assess the extent to which these units reflect a late Roman continuity, since nothing is known about their internal organization. Moreover, while terms and

117 Kühn, *Armee*, pp. 168-69; Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, p. 97.

titles may remain the same, their functions can change. For instance, in the late Roman period the *domestici* were the heads of elite units. When in the middle Byzantine period the empire adopted a more aggressive military policy and the military command structure was centralized, the *domestikos* of the schools became the commander-in-chief of the army, a function which this office held until the end of the empire. Similarly, the *doukes* of the late Roman Empire were the military commanders of frontier regions. In the 11th century, the *doukes* became heads of the new provinces established in the expanded frontier and unlike their later Roman predecessors were in charge of both the civil and military administration of the districts they governed. Under Alexios I, the *megas doux* became the head of the imperial fleet and maintained this position until the end of the period under discussion. The change in the function of offices reflects the need of the government to find suitable terms to identify new structures. It also illustrates the awareness of the Byzantine authorities of the continuity of the military structures of the Eastern Roman Empire from the 3rd through to the early 13th century.

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CHAPTER 8

Byzantine Fronts and Strategies 300-1204

Denis Sullivan

1 Period of Transition 300-502: Rome to Byzantium*

The period 293 to 502, from Diocletian to Anastasios, marked a new approach to sharing imperial administrative and defensive responsibilities in the late Roman Empire. Diocletian's (r. 284-305) tetrarchic collegial system saw two Augusti and two Caesars with headquarters not in Rome, but at Nikomedia, Sirmium, Milan and Trier, closer to the frontiers. He also separated provincial civil and military responsibilities, creating dukes to command specifically military forces along the land frontiers.[1] The development of mobile field armies is generally seen as incipient with Diocletian, but more fully implemented and substantial under Constantine I.[2] Constantine (r. 306-337) after 324 in effect created regional prefectures[3] and although ruling as sole Augustus himself, he named his three sons and a nephew as Caesars.[4] Permutations of the collegial system were attempted through much of the 4th century and into the fifth, but power sharing proved an "insoluble dilemma".[5] Valens, for example, made a disastrous decision to engage at Adrianople before reinforcements arrived from the West lest he share the glory of the victory with his counterpart Gratian.[6] In the 5th century the East, despite the demands of the Persian and Danube fronts, provided military assistance to the West in 410 (against Alaric), in 425 to aid Valentinian III, in the 430s against Gaiseric in North Africa, and in 440/1 for the joint expedition to Africa.[7]

* This paper was submitted in September 2014. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to consider related research published since that time. I am grateful to Professors Muriel Atkin and Elizabeth Fisher of The George Washington University for numerous valuable suggestions during the preparation of this chapter.

1 Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army*, pp. 8-9.

2 Nicasie, *Twilight of Empire*, pp. 40-41. See, however, Poulter, "The Lower Danubian Frontier in Late Antiquity", p. 16.

3 Kelly, "Bureaucracy and Government", p. 186.

4 Treadgold, *History,* p. 49.

5 Heather, *Fall of the Roman Empire,* pp. 130-31.

6 Ibid., p. 178.

7 Ibid., pp. 388-89.

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Edward Luttwak[8] has suggested that from the mid-3rd century and particularly under Diocletian and Constantine Rome developed a "defence-in-depth" strategy (following earlier periods of "expansionist" and "preclusive" approaches), with forces and installations in reserve some distance behind the border to deal with incursions. His tripartite schematization and even the possibility of a Roman grand strategy have been criticized from a number of perspectives and remain contentious. Everett Wheeler, however, while not endorsing Luttwak's specific formulation, analysed the debate and argued persuasively that the Romans were capable of planning and carrying out a "grand" strategy.[9] More recently Peter Heather has argued contra Luttwak that frontier "policy" was guided more by political and propaganda needs of emperors than by sustained rational planning.[10] The approach here (and below in the more specifically Byzantine material) will be to focus, however, not on the issue of grand strategy, but rather the application of the various components of strategy to the specific fronts in question.

Diocletian appears to have constructed significant fortifications to counter Persian inroads into Syria, among them at Circesium on the Euphrates,[11] and against Saracens with the Strata Diocletiana from Sura to southern Syria; he also built arms factories in Damascus.[12] The Battle of Satala (298) in Armenia and subsequent Roman victories under the Caesar Galerius over the Persian king Narses led to the Treaty of Nisibis (299), which gave Rome authority over Armenia, Georgian Iberia and portions of northern Mesopotamia.[13] The terms dictated by Diocletian and Galerius were conveyed to the Persian king by the *magister memoriae* Sicorius Probus.[14]

The treaty of 299 led to a relative peace on the front until 337 when the Persian king Shapur II invaded Roman Armenia. Constantine I responded with war preparations, including fortification projects at Amida; he rebuffed Persian diplomatic efforts to find a peaceful accommodation, but died at the beginning of the campaign.[15] His son Constantius II conducted annual campaigns against Shapur over the next twelve years with some successes.[16] In 359 Shapur renewed his attacks, besieging Amida in 359 and taking Singara in 360.

8 Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*.

9 Wheeler, "Methodological Limits and the Mirage of Roman Strategy", pp. 7-41 and 215-40.

10 Heather, "Holding the Line, pp. 227-46.

11 Millar, *The Roman Near East*, pp. 180-81.

12 Parker, *The Roman Frontier in Central Jordan,* vol. 2: p. 542.

13 See Blockley, "The Romano-Persian Peace Treaties".

14 For an account of his embassy see Dodgeon/Lieu, *The Roman Eastern*, p. 116.

15 Fowden, "Constantine and the People of the Eastern Frontier", spec. 392.

16 Treadgold, *History,* pp. 53 and 55.

Constantius II's successor Julian marched via Circesium on Ctesiphon,[17] but was eventually killed and his successor Jovian compelled to accept harsh terms for a thirty-year peace in order to save the army.[18] Persecution of Christians in 421 by the Persian king Bahram V and Theodosius II's refusal to return refugees resulted in hostilities, but incursions by the Huns into Dacia and Thrace made a treaty with the Persians in 422 essential.[19] In 440 Yazdgard II began hostilities with the Romans, but given the problems with the Vandals, Theodosius turned to diplomacy and sent his general Anatolios to negotiate peace directly with Yazdgard. One of the major points agreed to was that neither side would build future fortifications on the frontiers.[20]

The primary threats on the Danube front in the time of Diocletian were the Carpi, Sarmatians and Goths. New and advanced types of fortifications have been found in the area, some presumably attributable to Diocletian, although specific attribution is in many cases problematic.[21] He campaigned against the Carpi in 296-297 as did the Caesar Galerius in subsequent years and as did Constantine I in 316-317; resettlements of defeated Carpi were frequent. Constantine I built a bridge over the Danube at Oescus in 328 and a fort on the left bank,[22] and his subsequent campaigns resulted in the "Gothic peace" of 332; the Danube frontier remained relatively peaceful thereafter until 367.[23] In that year the emperor Valens began a moderately successful three-year campaign resulting in a treaty nullifying the empire's previous subsidy payment to the Goths.[24]

In 375 the arrival of the Huns pressured the Goths to ask Valens for asylum in Thrace in return for military service. Valens agreed, but lack of supplies, mistreatment, and further uninvited refugees resulted in the confrontation at Adrianople (378) with the catastrophic Roman defeat and the death of the emperor. When Sarmatians joined the raiding Goths, Gratian sent his general Theodosius east and the Sarmatians were crushed. The Goths remained a major threat to the badly weakened army, but reinforcements provided by Gratian aided in driving a Goth incursion back into Thrace and internal dissension among the Goths eased the pressure. In the 470s two Ostrogothic groups

17 On the enigma of Julian's motivation, defence of the frontier and revenge for Persian aggression or conquest see Seager, "Perceptions of Eastern Frontier Policy", pp. 253-68.

18 See Blockley, "The Romano-Persian Peace Treaties".

19 Frye, "The Political History of Iran under the Sasanians", p. 145.

20 Ibid., p. 145.

21 Poulter, "The Lower Danubian Frontier in Late Antiquity", pp. 16-20.

22 Ibid., p. 24.

23 Kulikowski, "Constantine and the Northern Barbarians", pp. 360-61.

24 Treadgold, *History,* p. 65.

invaded Thrace, and Dacia and Macedonia respectively. Leo I granted them lands to achieve peace and subsequently Zeno tried to set them against one another.[25] In 481 the group under Theodoric Strabo tried to take Constantinople by surprise, but the attempt was detected in time to man the walls. Zeno's attempts to placate the other group under Theodoric the Great with land and the consulship of 484 were short lived; in 486 Theodoric pillaged in Thrace and in 487 in the outskirts of Constantinople. Zeno's offer to Theodoric of the rule of Italy if he would depose Odoacer removed the Ostrogoth problem from the East.[26]

Huns first attacked various locations in the Eastern Empire in 395. The details of the eunuch regent Eutropius' campaign against them are unclear.[27] The treaty of Margus in the late 430s reflects East Roman diplomatic negotiations with Attila and his brother Bleda. The treaty's increase in the annual subsidy (from 350 to 700 pounds of gold) indicates the East's earlier and subsequent method of dealing with the Hun threat. The Huns soon violated the treaty, however, and took Viminacium and Naissus; details, presumably plausible, of Hun use of sophisticated siege machines, are recorded for the latter.[28] A new agreement was made in 442 to increase the subsidy, although payments were quickly stopped and efforts to strengthen the army undertaken. In 447 after negotiations failed Attila attacked. The Huns defeated two Roman field armies in separate engagements, but the Theodosian Land Walls, constructed between 405 and 413,[29] were repaired after an earthquake and saved the city. Thrace, however, was devastated. Attila then invaded Italy and died before returning to the East.

2 The Byzantine Period: Introduction

A fundamental aspect of Byzantine ideology was that of Roman world supremacy, the Byzantine emperor as ruler of the territorial extent of the Roman Empire. This gave the Byzantines the legitimacy to wage war to preserve the territory currently under Byzantine control and to recover parts of the Roman Empire no longer under that control. Byzantine strategy was pragmatic and

25 Ibid., pp. 155-56.

26 Evans, *The Age of Justinian*, p. 22.

27 Sinor, "The Hun Period", pp. 182-83.

28 Heather, *Fall of the Roman Empire,* pp. 301-02

29 Crow, "The Infrastructures of a Great City", pp. 251-58.

primarily defensive, however, with wars of territorial "re-conquest" largely limited to situations in which the balance of power was to their advantage.[30]

The reign of Justinian (527-565) has often been seen as one of 'grand design', including that of a Roman empire returning to its traditional geographical limits, but now a Christian orthodox empire. Following the taking of Sicily in 536 Justinian in the *Corpus Juris Civilis* speaks of his hope for God's granting of rule over all that had been lost;[31] he does seem to have harboured a grand strategy in a political-ideological sense.[32] Yet the motivations for the conquests in North Africa, Italy and Spain have also been seen as a product of the practical need to restore the emperor's lost credibility,[33] and as religious in origin (opposition to Arianism).[34] The resources devoted to the projects, particularly the Italian campaign, have been seen as initially less than adequate for conquest.[35] Likewise throughout the period 500-1204 the pursuit of a purely ideologically driven grand strategy is considerably less frequent than a mixed and more preservationist agenda.[36]

The empire had enemies on numerous fronts and lacked adequate manpower and economic resources, resulting in a generally defensive and battle avoidance strategy.[37] Persia, the Arabs, the steppe peoples, especially the Avars, Slavs, Bulgarians and eventually the Pechenegs, the Seljuks and Turkoman nomads, and the Goths, Lombards and Normans were among the most formidable, frequently requiring attention on more than one front simultaneously. Civil war and rebellions added to the complexity. Edward Luttwak, while granting that explicit statements of Byzantine grand strategy are not found, argues that a strategic "operational code" can be deduced from evidence of repeated behaviour. He begins with the dictum "Avoid war by every possible means in all possible circumstances, but always act as if it might start at any time", and continues with use of intelligence gathering, raiding and skirmishing as opposed to large-scale battle, recruiting allies to change the balance of power, subversion, and "relational" operational methods to circumvent enemy strength.[38]

It is clear the Byzantines chose from an array of strategic approaches, including diplomacy (e.g. marriage alliances, paying subsidies, setting enemies

30 See Koder/Stouraitis, "Byzantine Approaches to Warfare", pp. 9-15.

31 Louth, "Justinan and his Legacy", p. 107.

32 Haldon, *Warfare,* p. 39.

33 Louth, "Justinan and his Legacy", pp. 107 and 109.

34 Moorhead, "Western Approaches (500-600)", pp. 201-02.

35 Haldon, *Warfare,* p. 39; Louth, "Justinian and his Legacy", p. 109.

36 Haldon, *Warfare,* pp. 43-44.

37 Ibid., p. 37.

38 Luttwak, *Grand Strategy,* pp. 409-20.

against one another, bribery, religious conversion, movement of conquered populations, etc), construction of fortifications for both offensive and defensive purposes, and various military options, including delaying and depriving invaders of supplies, scorched earth tactics, and direct confrontation when absolutely necessary. An underlying factor was the availability of economic and manpower resources and the ability to direct their application. The choices in each instance were often made ad hoc in the context of the pressures of multiple fronts and the further complication of public opinion (e.g. perception of paying subsidies as demeaning to the empire, even if less expensive than use of military force). Amid the generally defensive posture, however, major offensive operations stand out, notably in the tenth and early 11th century, i.e. the campaigns of the general John Kourkouas in the East and the emperors Nikephoros II Phokas in Syria and Crete, John I Tzimiskes in Bulgaria and Syria-Palestine,[39] Basil II in Bulgaria, and the Komnenoi in Anatolia.

The approach here, as above, however, will be to focus not on the issue of grand strategy, but rather on the application of the various components of Byzantine strategy to the specific fronts in question.

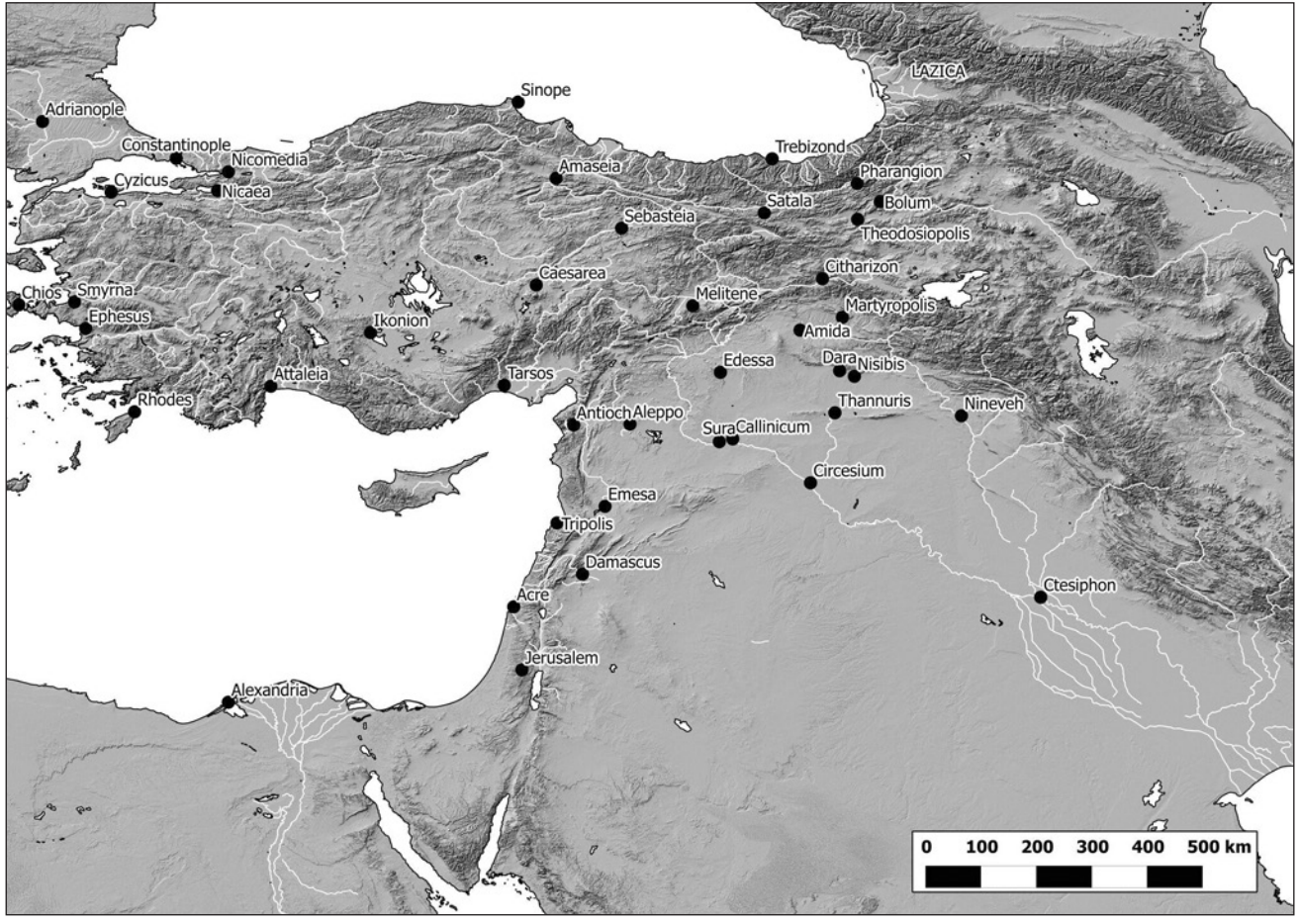
3 The Byzantine Persian Front 502-629

The treaties of 363 (particularly regarding Upper Mesopotamia) and 387 (regarding the division of Armenia) created conditions for relative peace between Persia and East Rome until the opening of the 6th century.[40] At that point the frontier of potential conflict stretched from Lazica on the Black Sea to Circesium at the confluence of the Khabur and Euphrates rivers. Further south the two empires employed Arab states as proxies, Ghassanids for the Byzantines and Lakhmids for the Persians.[41] Geographical and demographic conditions varied greatly along the front, from arable land to desert and from sparsely to more densely populated regions. The "borders" in the north were less well defined in contrast to those in the south. Procopius notes that Dara was 98 stades from Nisibis and "28 from the area which divides (διορίζει)

39 A. Kaldellis, Review of Luttwak, *Grand Strategy,* online at Bryn Mawr Classical Review. http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2010/2010-01-49.html

40 Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, pp. 39-45; Greatrex, "The Background and Aftermath of the Partition of Armenia in AD 387", pp. 35-48.

41 See Greatrex, *Rome and Persia,* p. 19.



MAP 8.1 The Persian front.
MAP DESIGNED BY DR JOHANNES PREISER-KAPELLER

Roman and Persian territory",[42] one of the clearer statements of a well-defined border.[43] On the Byzantine side the major frontier cities included Theodosiopolis in Byzantine Armenia, Martyropolis in Sophanene, and Amida in Northern Mesopotamia, on the Persian side Nisibis.

The Byzantine army in the 6th century included mobile field armies (*comitatenses*) and frontier troops (*limitanei*), as well as *foederati* (non-Roman recruits), *symmachoi* (allies), and *bucellarii* (private troops of commanders). Two of the field armies were *in praesenti* ("in the imperial presence") and stationed near Constantinople, others in Illyricum, Thrace and Oriens, each under a *magister militum.* They functioned as regional reserves.[44] The frontier troops were under the command of *duces*, who were subordinate to the *magistri*. The praesental armies might supplement the regional field armies. The *magister militum per Orientem* centred at Antioch had the responsibility for the Persian front. Justinian, however, divided the eastern front command and created a new *magister militum per Armeniam* based at Theodosiopolis, with additional *duces* and troops both newly recruited as well as transferred from other armies,[45] allowing more focused attention on the specific problems of Mesopotamia and Armenia.

No permanent representative of either state had a permanent residence in the other's territory. The Byzantine *magister officiorum* ("Master of Offices") had some official responsibilities for foreign relations. For example, Hermogenes, appointed to that office in 529, was sent to Chosroes I to negotiate peace, securing a one-year truce. Peter Patrikios, appointed to the office by Justinian in 535, negotiated with Chosroes in 550 and 561/2, the latter meeting resulting in a 50-year peace treaty. An envoy might also be someone with experience at a particular court. The *patrikios* Rufinus was among those sent by Justinian to negotiate with Chosroes in 532; he was well known in the Persian court from previous missions, one as early as 502;[46] Rufinus' father had known Chosroes's grandfather, and his own son John was later sent to negotiate with Chosroes in 540.[47] The agreement negotiated by Rufinus was the so-called "Eternal Peace", after which Justinian turned his attention to the Western front with loss of attention to the East and resultant diminution of manpower on that front and

42 Procopius, Wars, ed. Dewing, I.10.14.

43 See also below on ambassadorial exchanges at this border crossing.

44 Haldon, *Warfare,* p. 67.

45 Greatrex, "Dukes of the Eastern Frontier", p. 90.

46 Martindale, *Prosopography,* p. 954.

47 Lee, *Information and Frontiers,* pp. 46-47.

neglect of fortifications.[48] When the negotiations in 532 required consultation with Justinian, Rufinus was given seventy days to travel to Constantinople and return to the Persian court. A description survives of the 3 month long journey of a Persian ambassador in 551 from the frontier at Dara to Constantinople, accommodated en route by Byzantine imperial envoys, housed at imperial expense in Constantinople, and greeted by the emperor with exchange of gifts after the ambassador "had prostrated himself several times" prior to negotiations.[49] His initial entry into Byzantine territory indicates a high degree of precautions and formality, including a kind of "visa".[50] While the language of diplomacy was exceedingly polite, mutual suspicion was the reality.[51] Such envoys were generally accompanied by "escorts" to limit their ability to garner useful information. Spies were also employed at public expense to gather intelligence, although the route by which their product reached the emperor is unknown.[52]

Contacts with other groups were also used to divert and weaken the opponent. Prior to invading Byzantine territory in 540 Chosroes accused Justinian of trying to subvert Persian allies and to encourage the Huns to attack Persia. Procopius' account of the accusation would seem to add creditability to the charge.[53] One of the most contentious issues in such negotiations was the agreement to make payments to the Persians. As a provision of the "Eternal Peace" of 532 Justinian agreed to a one-time payment of 11,000 pounds of gold to the Persians. In 562 he agreed to a sum of 500 pounds per year. The appearance of paying tribute out of weakness evoked opposition and in 572, his successor Justin II stopped the payments, resulting in renewed hostilities and, among other untoward consequences, the loss of Dara to the Persians in 573. Justin's successor Tiberius (578-582) renewed the payments for a three-year period. The emperor Maurice (582-602) was able to achieve a period of peace by different means, when he provided military assistance to aid in the restoration of the deposed Persian ruler Chosroes II.[54]

The relative peace of the 5th century and treaty agreements not to build in the frontier zone had apparently resulted in Byzantine neglect of fortifications

48 Greatrex, "Byzantium and the East in the Sixth Century", p. 488.

49 Ibid, p. 477.

50 See Kaegi, "Reconceptualizing Byzantium's Eastern Frontiers in the Seventh Century", pp. 84-85; Dimitroukas, "The Trip of the Great Persian Embassies to Byzantium", pp. 171-84.

51 Whitby, "Byzantine Diplomacy", p. 137.

52 Lee, *Information and Frontiers*, pp. 166-68, 170-82.

53 See Kaldellis, "Procopius' Persian War", pp. 262-63.

54 Whitby, *Emperor Maurice,* pp. 297-304.

along the Persian front, as reflected in significant and extensive building and rebuilding efforts in the early 6th century. Such fortifications had both defensive and offensive applications. They provided temporary refuge for rural folk and presented obstacles to assaults on the interior by requiring expensive and time-consuming siege efforts or, if by-passed, dangers to supply lines. They also served as bases for offensive operations.[55] The most prominent and significant of these building efforts was Anastasios' creation of Dara 5km from the frontier, initially as a base against Nisibis and in response to the problems encountered in the Persian incursions of 502-505 (though built in violation of the treaty).[56] Procopius' (*Buildings* II.1-2) description of Justinian's subsequent (presumably after 527) major improvements to Dara's circuit walls, towers and *proteichisma* is best taken as substantially correct.[57] Procopius also notes that he had the original apertures of the battlements reduced by insertion of stones to create only narrow slits for more safely shooting arrows at attackers, indicating the importance of covering fire in Byzantine defensive strategy.[58] Other significant fortification efforts on the frontier include the restoring of the walls of Martyropolis (modern Silvan) as a base for attacks into Arzanene, extending their thickness and height, and adding a *proteichisma*, and presumably new or extended towers,[59] a new fortress constructed at Citharizon[60] further north, "purpose-built for a senior frontier commander",[61] and the walls of Theodosiopolis.[62] Martyropolis and Theodosiopolis had submitted without a siege in the Persian assault of 502. Both were located in territory the Byzantines considered their own.

In summer of 502 the Persian king Cabades, in search of funds to reward his allies, invaded Byzantine territory. He took Theodosiopolis and Martyropolis without resistance and besieged Amida that fell only after three months of hard fighting in 503. Pseudo-Joshua and Procopius provide details of the Persian siege machines and of the defenders' responses (they countered battering rams with cushioning bundles of rushes and with timbers dropped on the rams, they responded to a siege mound by elevating the walls; but finally

55 Greatrex, *Rome and Persia,* pp. 40-45.

56 Whitby, "Procopius' Description of Dara (*Buildings* II. 1-3)", p. 751.

57 Ibid., passim.

58 Foss/Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*, p. 9.

59 Whitby, "Procopius' Description of Martyropolis (*Buildings* III.2.10-14)", pp. 177-82.

60 Howard-Johnston, "Procopius, Roman Defences North of the Taurus and the New Fortress of Citharizon".

61 Ibid., p. 203.

62 Whitby, "Procopius' Description of Dara (*Buildings* II. 1-3)", p. 727. See Whitby here for additional constructions and reconstruction.

the Persians undermined the walls, used wooden props then fire, and finally a *scorpio*), the city being eventually entered through underground tunnels and on scaling ladders. Pseudo-Joshua reports that 50,000 Persians died in the three-month period, while after the capture of the city 80,000 Amidenes were slaughtered.[63] Cabades then unsuccessfully besieged Edessa, and by 504 the Byzantines had recaptured Amida. In 506 a truce was concluded.

Cabades' initial success suggests the unprepared state of the Byzantine cities; one of the emperor Anastasios' responses was the construction, though in violation of treaty agreements, of the fortification at Dara. Zacharias of Mitylene[64] provides a valuable contemporary rationale advanced by the Byzantine generals for the construction of Dara. They argued to Anastasios that their failures, particularly in being unable to launch a counterattack against Nisibis, were due to the absence of a fortress close enough and large enough to store siege engines, to provide a safe refuge and protection for a large army with adequate supplies of water and vegetables, to serve for preparation of weapons, and to serve as a guard post against Persian incursions. A related, though generic, list of the purposes of such fortifications can be found in the anonymous 6th century *Peri strategias* 9.3-8: "to observe the approach of the enemy; second, to receive deserters from the enemy; to hold back any fugitives from our own side. The fourth is to facilitate assembly for raids against outlying enemy territories".[65] In combination these passages illustrate contemporary thinking on the strategic significance of such facilities.

A relative peace continued following the truce of 506 for almost 20 years, until fighting again broke out particularly in the Transcaucasus area. In 528 the Persians took two forts in eastern Lazica and prevented Roman attempts to construct fortifications at Thannuris on the border. In 530 Cabades attacked on two fronts, Dara and Armenia. Justinian had gathered a force of 25,000 men at Dara under Belisarius in anticipation of a possible Persian invasion. Rather than withdraw into Dara, Belisarius chose to meet the numerically superior Persians (40,000, with 10,000 subsequent reinforcements), despite the generally accepted strategic dictum of avoiding pitched battle in such circumstances. It is possible that the Justinianic improvements to the fortifications of Dara were not yet complete,[66] or that the size of the army would have quickly exhausted its supplies. However, Belisarius had the choice of the battlefield, which he improved with a set of defensive ditches (apparently to make it dif-

63 Lenski, "Two Sieges of Amida", pp. 219-36.

64 Greatrex et al., *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor*, p. 247.

65 Dennis, *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, p. 29.

66 Greatrex, *Rome and Persia,* p. 170.

ficult for the Persian cavalry to attack the Roman infantry). He also appears to have used a natural narrowing of the terrain[67] to neutralize the Persian numerical advantage, and perhaps to have exploited the proximity of the fortifications.[68] There is an ad hoc quality to such decisions reflecting the frequent recommendation of the Byzantine military manuals that the commander maintain flexibility in the field.[69] The result was a significant Roman victory. In summer of the same year an invading Persian force was defeated at Satala in Byzantine Armenia, and the Byzantines subsequently took two forts at Bolum and Pharangium in Persian Armenia.[70] The following year, however, a Persian force of 20,000, all cavalry, crossed the frontier at Circesium and moved into Syria. Eventually Belisarius was defeated at Callinicum with heavy casualties.[71]

Initial negotiations with Persia following the defeat were repulsed and additional Persian attacks followed, including an unsuccessful siege of Martyropolis, which included mines, an earth ramp, scaling-ladders, and a siege tower.[72] Justinian had cities supplied against potential sieges. The death of the aged Cabades and the necessity for his son and successor Chosroes I to solidify his position, however, led the Persians to seek terms, while Justinian was eager to deploy his forces to the western front. After initial diplomatic manoeuvring and the collapse of one agreement, the so-called "Eternal Peace" was established: Justinian agreed to pay 11,000 pounds of gold to Chosroes I (as noted above), the forts taken in Lazica and Persarmenia were to be returned to their respective sides, and mutual assistance, financial and military, was to be supplied as needed.[73]

The "Eternal Peace" of 532 had lasted only 9 years when war began in Lazica ending with a truce in 557. The subsequent Fifty Years Peace of 562 included an annual payment of gold to the Persians by Justinian.[74] His successor Justin II, as noted above, ended the payments in 572 and initiated another period of war lasting at varied levels of intensity until 592. Hostilities ended in a process that provides a fascinating approach to strategy. A revolt in Persia in 590 by the general Bahram against Chosroes II led the latter to flee to Byzantine territory

67 Lillington-Martin, "Archaeological and Ancient Literary Evidence for a Battle near Dara Gap", pp. 299-311.

68 Whitby, "War", p. 330. Haldon, *Byzantine Wars,* p. 29 suggests as a factor the poor quality of Persian troops.

69 Sullivan, "Byzantine Military Manuals", p. 158 and p. 160.

70 Greatrex and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier,* p. 91.

71 Greatrex, *Rome and Persia,* pp. 195-207.

72 Ibid., pp. 208-10.

73 Greatrex/Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier,* p. 97.

74 Ibid., pp. 131-33.

and to seek Byzantine assistance in recovering his throne with promises of surrender of territory in Armenia. The emperor Maurice sent a Byzantine force to assist Chosroes II, which caused Persian troops near Nisibis to go over from Bahram to Chosroes II. Combined Byzantine-Persian forces decisively defeated Bahram in the battle of Blarathon. Chosroes II, who had already returned Dara and Martyropolis to Byzantine control, now handed over many cities in the Caucasus to the Byzantines without demanding any financial considerations.[75] A decade of relative peace followed, allowing increased Byzantine focus on the Balkan front.

With the opening of the 7th century the generally limited nature of Persian ambitions in the 6th changed. The murder of Maurice by Phokas in 602 gave Chosroes II the opportunity to claim to avenge his benefactor by expanding hostilities well beyond the border regions. By 614 Persian forces had taken Antioch, Edessa, Emesa, Damascus, and Jerusalem (where they seized a fragment of the "true cross") and in 619 Alexandria. By 611 they had occupied Caesarea in Cappadocia and in 615 crossed all of Asia Minor and in the 616 took Chalcedon, although they were quickly compelled to withdraw.[76] By the 620s Byzantine strategy under Heraclius took a new direction. The emperor assumed personal command in the field (in contravention of standard military thinking), spent time in carefully training the army and unexpectedly invaded Persia via the northern route through Armenia, using what Luttwak describes as a "deep penetration offensive" or "strategic raid" whose boldness reaped the reward of total surprise.[77] He also instituted a financial austerity program, launched a propaganda effort particularly emphasizing Persian atrocities in the sack of Jerusalem, presented the war as Christianity against Zoroastrianism, and concluded a military alliance with the Turks.[78] Finally an unexpected winter campaign[79] in 627 resulted in a Byzantine victory near Nineveh and eventually led to a treaty that restored to the Byzantines all lost territory and ceded to them the relic of the precious true cross.[80]

75 Bosworth, *The History of al-Tabari, V*, pp. 311-15.

76 Frendo, "The Territorial Ambitions of Chosroes II, An Armenian View?", pp. 30-39.

77 Luttwak, *Grand Strategy*, pp. 399-400.

78 Howard-Johnston, "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns", pp. 1-44.

79 Luttwak, *Grand Strategy*, p. 408 describes this winter campaign after successive years without one as a "relational maneuver".

80 Greatrex/Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier,* pp. 226-28.

4 The Balkan Front: Part I (c. 490-658)

In the late 5th century proto-Bulgars began raiding across the Danube. They were followed in the 6th and 7th centuries particularly by Slavs and Avars, but also by Gepids, Lombards and other steppe peoples.

The Long Walls that stretched from the Sea of Marmara to the Black Sea about 65 km to the west of Constantinople were constructed by Anastasios *c.* 505, apparently as a defence of the capital against the Bulgars; they were repaired by Justinian under his personal supervision. They have been seen as an indication of the difficulty of maintaining imperial control of the Balkans, although as long as they were maintained and garrisoned, they apparently served as a valuable defensive barrier for the capital itself.[81] Procopius (*Buildings* IV) lists some 600 places in the Balkans where Justinian is said to have had fortifications constructed. While Procopius' fondness for rhetoric, the dearth of archaeological evidence supporting his claim, and the possibility that some of the fortifications should be attributed to Anastasios and Justin I have raised doubts, the two-fold strategic intent noted for these installations by Procopius (i.e. when possible to stop tribes from crossing the Danube, and when not possible, to provide interior fortifications to serve as temporary refuge during incursions) appears correct.[82] Justinian's defensive works also involved a wall across the Thracian Chersonese (Gallipoli), which included moles extending well out into the water.[83] The emperor Maurice is said to have had a great defensive ditch constructed near Adrianople *c.* 586.[84]

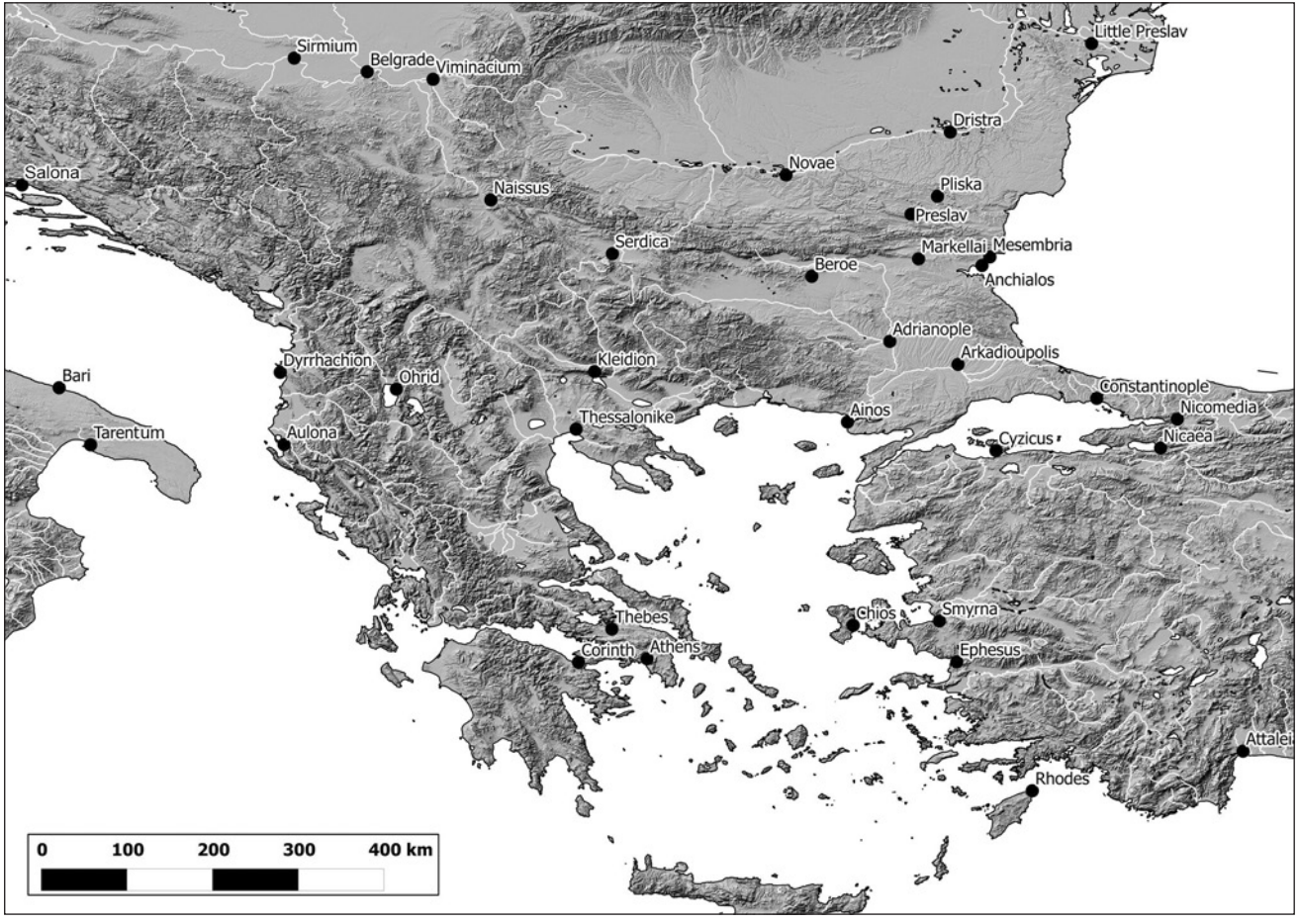
In 558 the Avars arrived to the north of the Caucasus and dispatched an embassy to Constantinople. Their subsequent interaction with the Byzantines reflects the range of Byzantine diplomacy. Justinian agreed to provide them with gold in return for Avar assistance against the Kutrigurs and Utigurs, other nomadic groups of the steppes. Over the next four years the Avars' success led to their dominance in the region and in 662 they demanded an increased subsidy as well as land south of the Danube; the latter demand was denied. Justin II, Justinian's successor, refused to continue the subsidy but without immediate negative consequences. Instead the Avars, in league with the Lombards, destroyed the Gepids and further enhanced their own power. Subsequent negotiations to allow the Avars to settle in the Balkans failed over Justin's insis-

81 Crow, "The Long Walls of Thrace", pp. 120-22.

82 Whitby, *Emperor Maurice,* pp. 74-76.

83 Greatrex, "Procopius and Agathias on the Defences of the Thracian Chersonese", p. 126.

84 Whitby, *Emperor Maurice,* pp. 144-45.



MAP 8.2 The Balkan front.
MAP DESIGNED BY DR JOHANNES PREISER-KAPELLER

tence that hostages must be provided from the family of the Avar khan himself.[85] Justin's successor Tiberius agreed to restore and increase the subsidy in return for Avar defence of the Danube front, freeing Byzantine troops for the Persian front.[86] On the accession of Maurice in 582 the Avars again sent an embassy, but rejected Maurice's gifts (an elephant and golden couch) and demanded an increased subsidy. The demand was refused, but after Avar attacks and initially unsuccessful negotiations, peace was concluded in 584 with the increase of the subsidy. Independent Slav raids, however, apparently continued.[87]

Military encounters were frequent both at and beyond the Danube and near Constantinople. In the 530s Chilbudios, *magister militum* per Thracias (*c.* 530-533), when ordered to prevent the barbarians (i.e. Huns, Antae, and Sclaveni) from crossing the Danube, campaigned against them north of the river.[88] In 558 the Kutrigurs under their Khan Zabergan crossed the frozen Danube, penetrated the earthquake-damaged Long Walls and threatened Constantinople with 7000 cavalry. Belisarius, recalled from retirement, mustered an improvised army of veterans, guardsmen and volunteers,[89] and defeated them; Zabergan was then bought off with the promise of subsidies.[90] Justin II later sent the count of the Exkoubitors Tiberius to campaign against the Avars with an initial success, followed by subsequent defeat in 570-571.[91]

The early years of Maurice's reign (582-602) saw the lack of an army in the Balkans capable of preventing Slav and Avar inroads, but reduced to only limiting the damage they could cause.[92] These raids extended as far as the Peloponnese and the Avar siege of Thessalonica recorded in the *Miracula S. Demetrii* is most likely to be dated to 586.[93] The treaty with Persia in 591 allowed units of the eastern army to be moved to the Balkan front with a resulting change of strategy.[94] In 593 the general Priscus crossed the Danube with resulting successes against the Slavs, as did Maurice's brother, Peter, in 594.[95] In 595 Priscus campaigned on the north bank as far as Upper Novae and won a

85 Martindale, *Prosopography,* pp. 1324-25.
86 Treadgold, *History,* pp. 223-24.
87 Whitby, *Emperor Maurice,* pp. 142-43.
88 Procopius, Wars, ed. Dewing, VII.14.2; Curta, "The *Making of the Slavs* between Ethnogenesis, Invention and Migration", p. 171.
89 Treadgold, *History,* p. 213
90 W. Kaegi/A. Kazhdan, "Zabergan", *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium,* vol. 3: p. 2217.
91 Martindale, *Prosopography,* pp. 1324-25.
92 Whitby, *Emperor Maurice,* p. 143
93 Ibid., p. 117.
94 Ibid., p. 158.
95 Ibid., pp. 160-61.

series of victories over the Avars in Pannonia in 599. Whitby suggests that Maurice's policy of "constant aggressive defence" resulted in increased respect by Slavs and Avars for Roman power,[96] but also led in 602 to the army's mutiny and the emperor Maurice's ultimate demise.

The lack of army support for a continuation of Maurice's policy under his successor Phokas (602-610), Heraclius' seizure of power with subsequent civil unrest, and renewed hostilities with Persia ended the strategy of aggressive defence on the Balkan front. The Avars' failure in the siege of Constantinople in 626, however, was a factor in the subsequent dissolution of the Avar federation, although the Slavic pressure on Byzantium continued.[97] In 658 Constans II led an expedition into Sklavinia, the "first in more than half a century", apparently to secure southern Thrace.[98]

5 The Balkan Front: Part II (680-1186)

In *c.* 680 a group of Bulgars under Asparukh sought to settle south of the Danube. Constantine IV's military attempts to prevent the settlement failed and a subsequent treaty confirmed the Bulgar's occupation of Byzantine territory. After some Slav groups aligned with the Bulgars a Bulgaro-Slav political entity, eventually centered at Pliska, developed.[99] By the late 8th century the two axioms of Byzantine strategic response were (1) to stop raids at the border with garrisoned fortifications and local troops, and, when this was not effective (2) to initiate direct confrontation by larger armies of both local and tagmatic troops.[100] Notable among the subsequent hostilities were the extension of Bulgarian power under Khan Krum (*c.* 803-814),[101] the wars waged by Symeon I (893-927) in his quest to become emperor of both Bulgarians and Greeks, the conquest of Bulgaria by Basil II (976-1025),[102] and the formation of the Second Bulgarian Empire as a result of the Vlach revolt begun in 1185/1186 and led by the brothers Peter and Asen.[103]

As noted below in more detail the thematic armies that developed following Byzantine withdrawal after the Arab conquests were supplemented

96 Ibid., p. 165.
97 Ibid., p. 184.
98 Treadgold, *History,* p. 315.
99 Treadgold, *History,* pp. 328-29; Louth, "Byzantium Transformed (600-700)", p. 233.
100 Sophoulis, *Byzantium and Bulgaria,* p. 99.
101 Auzépy, "State of Emergency (700-850)", p. 257.
102 Shepard, "Equilibrium to Expansion", pp. 526-530.
103 Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier,* pp. 289-94.

by Constantine V's creation of the fully professional *tagmata*. With the more aggressive approach to warfare beginning in the mid-10th century the tagmatic forces became more dominant; by the 11th century thematic forces declined and garrisons of full-time professionals were stationed in recently conquered areas. Non-Byzantine mercenaries became common.[104]

Theophanes the Confessor attributes to Constantine VI a most undiplomatic response to a demand by the Bulgarian Khan Kardam in 796 for restoration of tribute under threat of devastating Thrace. The young emperor is said to have sent equine excrement as the "fitting tribute" together with a promise of direct confrontation.[105] The two armies confronted one another but battle was averted. In 924 Symeon again reached the walls of Constantinople and, after meeting with the patriarch, met directly with the emperor Romanos I, who protected himself by wearing the shawl (*omophorion*) of the Virgin Mary. In this rare meeting of two rulers in direct negotiation Symeon agreed to a truce in return for tribute.[106] In 927 in response to a Bulgarian peace initiative, Romanos I agreed to the marriage of his granddaughter Maria to Symeon's son and successor Peter.[107] In 966 Nikephoros II Phokas refused continuation of payment of tribute to Peter and instead paid Svyatoslav of Kiev to attack the Bulgarians.

Svyatoslav's success, however, and occupation of Little Preslav created a new enemy. By 971 John I Tzimiskes had confronted and defeated Svyatoslav at Dristra and again the two rulers met. Tzimiskes agreed to allow Svyatoslav to withdraw in safety and also to resume commercial relations with the Kievan Rus'.[108] In 987 the emperor Basil II, threatened by rebellion, appealed to prince Vladimir of Kiev for assistance and agreed to Vladimir's demand of marriage to Basil's sister, the imperial princess Anna. The Kievan prince sent 6000 troops who were to become the Varangian guard and the marriage took place.[109] This marriage of a Byzantine princess as well as that of Maria to Peter of Bulgaria noted above have been seen as indicative of the high stakes involved in achieving peace in these instances.[110]

The Pecheneg threat against Paristrion, Thrace and Macedonia beginning in 1027 was met by Michael IV's minister John the Orphanotrophos with a

104 Haldon, *Warfare,* pp. 115-20.

105 Sophoulis, *Byzantium and Bulgaria,* p. 16.

106 Treadgold, *History,* p. 478.

107 Shepard, "Equilibrium to Expansion", p. 508; Panagopoulou, *ΟΙ ΔΙΠΛΩΜΑΤΙΚΟΙ ΓΑΜΟΙ,* pp. 131-39.

108 Haldon, *Byzantine Wars,* p. 157.

109 Treadgold, *History,* pp. 517-18; Panagopoulou, *ΟΙ ΔΙΠΛΩΜΑΤΙΚΟΙ ΓΑΜΟΙ,* pp. 172-78.

110 Macrides, "Dynastic Marriages and Political Kinship", p. 273.

multipronged approach, including population relocation to stronger towns and the provision of "controlled" and peaceful access to the goods the raiders desired at fortified emporia.[111] Isaak II Angelos' rapacious treatment of the Vlachs, and particularly his rejection of the brothers Peter and Asen, played a large part in fomenting the Vlach revolt of 1186[112] and leading to the Second Bulgarian Empire.

Fortifications also played an important role in Byzantine strategy on the Balkan front (680-1186). Arkadioupolis and Adrianople were among the foremost cities;[113] there were numerous smaller fortresses, and among the most important was Markellai, which served to guard the passes of Rish and Varbitsa for both defensive and offensive purposes and which was the site of important battles.[114] Constantine V (r. 741-775) is credited with the erection of numerous fortresses in Thrace as a defence against the Bulgarians.[115] He also transferred heretic populations from the east to Thrace to act as a buffer, as did Leo IV.[116] In 784 the empress Irene went personally to see to the restoration of fortifications at Anchialos and Beroe; other *kastra* were also rebuilt in subsequent years.[117] The walls of Mesembria, which functioned as a mustering centre, though lost to Byzantine control for considerable periods, were restored on two occasions during the ninth and tenth centuries.[118] In his siege of Dristra John Tzimiskes occupied and secured with garrisons some forts on the left bank of the Danube that had surrendered to him. He subsequently reconstructed former Byzantine fortresses in the area to secure the conquered region.[119] Some of these were apparently redeveloped and later reoccupied by Basil II. Under Basil II Sirmium's walls were renewed and a garrison installed.[120]

In 708 the emperor Justinian II, in an attempt to recover imperial land he had ceded to the Bulgarian Khan Tervel, took his army to Anchialos. The Bulgarian forces unexpectedly attacked and thoroughly defeated the Byzantine troops during a foraging expedition; after a three-day siege the remaining Byzantine forces left secretly. Constantine V defeated a Bulgarian incursion that penetrated to the Long Walls in 754; until his death in 775 the same emperor led a

111 Stephenson, "Byzantine Policy toward Paristrion in the Mid-eleventh Century", pp. 46-48.
112 Magdalino, "The Empire of the Komnenoi (1118-1204)", pp. 655-56.
113 Sophoulis, *Byzantium and Bulgaria,* p. 53
114 Ibid., p. 167.
115 Kountoura, "New Fortresses and Bishoprics in 8th Century Thrace", pp. 279-87.
116 Obolensky, *The* Bogomils, pp. 60-61.
117 Sophoulis, *Byzantium and Bulgaria,* pp. 162-63.
118 Kostova, "Byzantine Fortifications".
119 Madgearu, "The Military Organization of Paradunavon", pp. 421-46.
120 Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier,* p. 121.

number of expeditions by land and sea with the intention of subjugating the Bulgars,[121] including a victory at Markellai in 756.[122] In 791 and 792 Constantine VI led expeditions in response to earlier Bulgar raids, both of which resulted in Byzantine defeats, the second at Markellai.[123] In response to the raids of Khan Krum beginning in 807 and including the taking of Serdica in 809, Nikephoros I led a large expedition to Markellai that took and sacked Pliska. After the victory, however, the retreating Byzantine army was soundly defeated and the emperor himself killed.[124] Until his death in 814 Khan Krum conducted a number of raids as far as Constantinople and besieged it in 813.[125] Tsar Symeon of Bulgaria (893-927) inflicted a major defeat and severe casualties upon a Byzantine army of perhaps 30,000 under Leo Phokas near Anchialos, due in large part to the Byzantine troops' mistaken belief that their commander had been killed.[126]

As noted the Byzantine attempt to use Svyatoslav of Kiev against the Bulgarians resulted in a new enemy on the northern front; in 971 the emperor John I Tzimiskes campaigned against him, took Preslav and forced Svyatoslav's surrender at Dristra. Eastern Bulgaria now became a Byzantine province.[127] Basil II (976-1025) the "Bulgar-Slayer" campaigned frequently against the Bulgarians to regain former imperial territory; his victory at Kleidion in 1014 was particularly significant and by 1018 virtually all of Bulgaria was incorporated into the empire.[128] Isaak II Angelos (1185-1195 and 1203-1204) launched a counter-offensive against the Vlachs and a number of campaigns followed, but by 1200 the lack of a sustained Byzantine effort and rebellions of generals, combined with the use of guerrilla tactics by the rebels left Vlachs, Bulgars and Cumans in control of lands north of the Haemus Mountains.[129]

6 The Arab Front

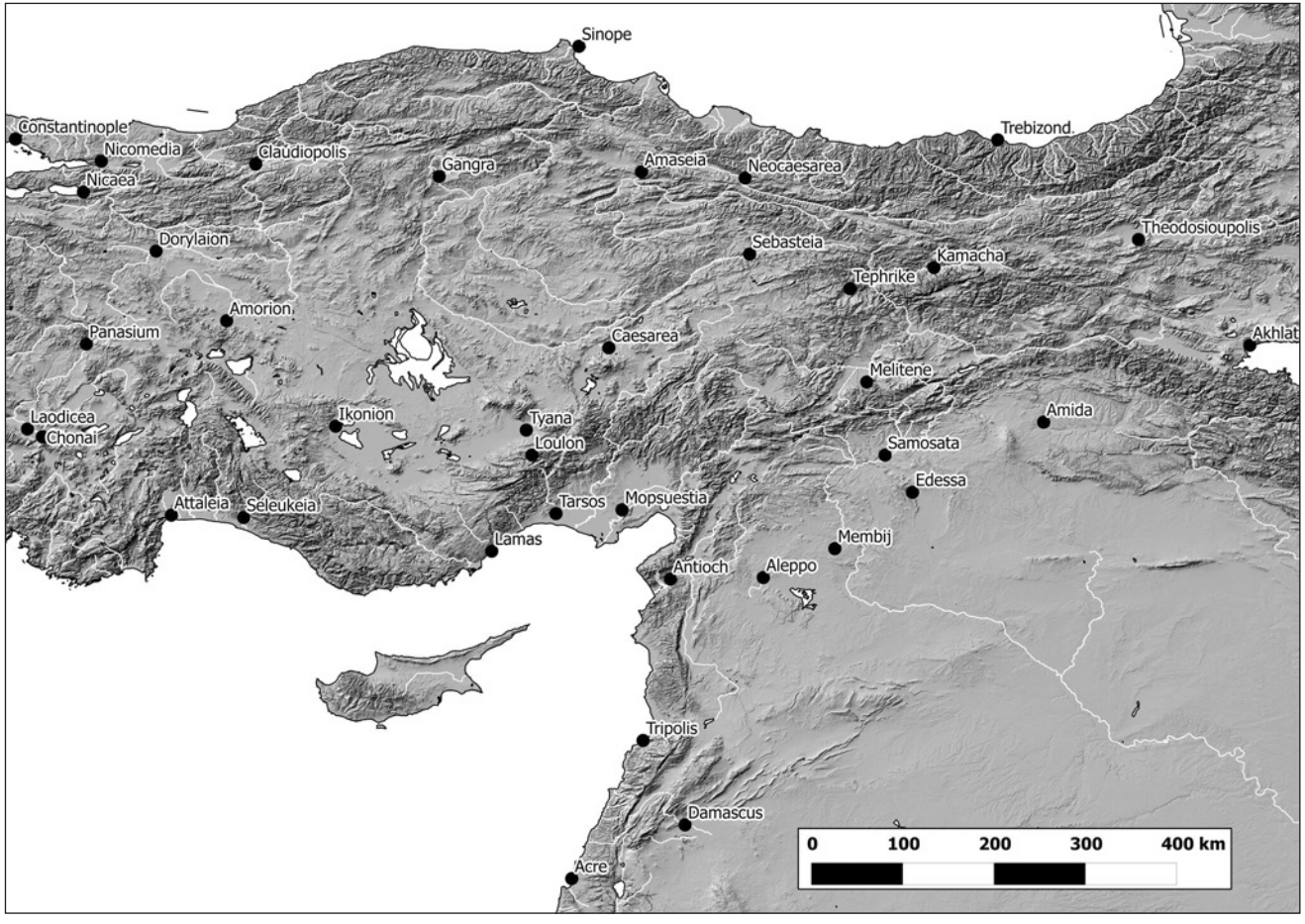
Heraclius' victory over the Persians in 628 led to the withdrawal of Persian forces from occupied Byzantine territory and ended the Byzantine-Sassanid wars. Within six years a new threat emerged out of Arabia, however, which has

121 Haldon, *Byzantine Wars,* pp. 73-74; Treadgold, *History,* pp. 362-66.
122 A. Kazhdan, "Markellai", *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 3, p. 1300.
123 Sophoulis, *Byzantium and Bulgaria,* pp. 167-168.
124 Ibid., pp. 192-216.
125 Haldon, *Byzantine Wars,* p. 78.
126 Ibid., pp. 91-92.
127 Ibid., pp. 149-57.
128 Ibid., pp. 161-63.
129 Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier,* pp. 290-94, 300-08.

been described as a "human tsunami".[130] The invading waves of different tribal groups have been seen as resulting from the organizing power of the new religion of Islam, but also from the traditional goals of "adventure, fighting and plunder".[131] Seminal was the battle at Jābiya-Yarmūk near the Golan Heights in 636 where a large Byzantine force was decisively defeated, ending coordinated defence of Syria or Palestine.[132] Mesopotamia and Egypt were soon to fall. Heraclius decided to withdraw to a new defensive line behind the Taurus Anti-Taurus Mountains; this was to become the main Arab-Byzantine front well into the 10th century. In addition the Arab navy was to render the Mediterranean shores another front with unsuccessful attacks (674-678, 718) on Constantinople itself, the successful conquests of the exarchate of Africa (698), and Sicily and Crete (820s), the sack of Thessalonica (904), and various coastal raids.[133]

Apparently within a few years after Jābiya-Yarmūk the armies of the *magistri militum* of Oriens and Armenia were withdrawn into Asia Minor[134] along the Taurus Anti-Taurus range and dispersed into various fortified locations in a defensive posture and where they could be maintained locally. Over time these became the geographically identified thematic armies, with troops that were scattered and slow to mobilize.[135] Heraclius also seems to have sought to turn Cilicia into a no-man's land employing a scorched-earth policy[136] and establishing a defensive area or Kleisoura to the north.[137] The Arabs developed the al-thugur,[138] a front line of border fortress towns, Tarsos being the most prominent.[139] The Byzantine defences well into the 10th century were frequently incapable of actually stopping incursions, but became an "early warning system", providing time for locals to move to safe refuges, and employing guerrilla tactics[140] against the invaders.[141] Constantine V, in response to revolts by the thematic army in Opsikion, created the *tagmata* ("regiments"), elite, perma-

130 Howard-Johnston, *East Rome*, p. xv.
131 Conrad, "The Arabs to the time of the Prophet", pp. 194-95.
132 Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, p. 146.
133 Pryor/Jeffreys, *The Age of the ΔΡΟΜΩΝ,* pp. 7-122.
134 Haldon, *Warfare,* pp. 71-74.
135 Ibid., p. 74.
136 Haldon/Kennedy, "The Arab-Byzantine Frontier", p. 83.
137 Ibid., p. 84; Lilie, "The Byzantine-Arab Borderland from the Seventh to the Ninth Century", pp. 13-14.
138 Eger, *The Spaces between the Teeth*.
139 See Bosworth, "The City of Tarsus and the Arab-Byzantine Frontiers", pp. 268-86.
140 See Dagron/Mihaescu, *La traité sur la guerilla.*
141 Haldon/Kennedy, "The Arab-Byzantine Frontier", p. 84.



MAP 8.3 The Arab front.
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nent, non-thematic professional units, stationed in and near Constantinople. These were full-time regiments, readily mobilized, initially four in number but with others added in later centuries. Constantine V subsequently used them successfully, notably against the Arabs[142] and Bulgarians.[143] With the shift to an offensive strategy in the mid-10th century, detachments of the *tagmata* came to be placed on the frontiers for offensive purposes.[144]

Kennedy provides a valuable four-part chronology for diplomatic contacts: (1) *c.* 636-717, "irregular contacts" resulting from internal problems; (2) 717-*c.* 780, little evidence of any contacts; (3) 780-969, "increasingly formal contacts" particularly regarding prisoner exchanges; and (4) 969-mid 11th century, Byzantine contacts motivated by concern to preserve the reacquired Syria.[145] The nature of the negotiators varied greatly. In 650-51 Constans II sent a *strategos* to Damascus to seek peace and in 658-59 Muawiyah sent an emissary named Fanaq al-Rumi, presumably of Greek extraction, to Constantinople on a similar mission. In 781-82 Harun al-Rashid, raiding as far as the Sea of Marmara, received tribute payment for a truce. In 803 Nikephoros I wrote to Harun to abrogate a treaty previously agreed to by the empress Irene in 798; an invasion followed and the emperor finally paid both tribute and a personal poll tax.[146] A list of 12 prisoner exchanges between 805 and 946 survives, all occurring near the mouth of the river Lamis, a frontier marker on the Tarsos-Tyana axis.[147] Notable in this context are letters from the emperor Theophilos to al-Ma'mun, one in 831 offering return of prisoners and payments for return of captured fortresses, another carried by John the Grammarian to Damascus in 832 in an unsuccessful attempt to deter an expected attack by noting the benefit of increased trade.[148] In the final phase of diplomatic contacts al-Hakim in the year 1000 sent the patriarch of Jerusalem to negotiate a truce with Basil II.[149]

Another important aspect of such negotiations was the role of gifts. The *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, for example, provides an extensive list of gifts that accompanied a Byzantine mission to Baghdad in 937-38 to request a truce and prisoner exchange; the gifts included bejewelled gold and silver vessels,

142 See Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army*, pp. 28-32

143 See above pp. 277-78.

144 Haldon, *Warfare,* p. 84.

145 Kennedy, "Byzantine-Arab Diplomacy", pp. 133-34.

146 Ibid., pp. 134-39.

147 See Trombley, "The Arabs, the Byzantine State and the Islamic Law of War", p. 162.

148 For the details of the exchange see De Gifis, "Qur 'anic Rhetoric in Ninth-Century Muslim-Byzantine Diplomacy", pp. 297-320.

149 Kennedy, "Byzantine-Arab Diplomacy", p. 143.

cups and caskets, and many varieties of silk cloth.[150] In 969 Nikephoros II Phokas sent to al-Mu'zzi, the Fatamid ruler of Carthage "the sword of the most accursed and impious Muhammad…plundered from "one of the fortresses… captured in Palestine", accompanied by a demand for the release of a captive high-ranking Byzantine dignitary and threatening war if al-Mu'zzi failed to do so.[151] Particularly indicative of the diplomatic significance of gifts is the caliph al-Ma'mun's (813-833) reaction to a gift sent him by Emperor Theophilos: "Send him a gift a hundred times as much as his, so that he recognizes the glory of Islam and the grace which Allah bestowed on us through it".[152] The *Kletorologion* of Philotheos, dated 899 and containing lists of court precedence, indicates that Arab prisoners were invited to Christmas and Easter Sunday imperial banquets.[153] During the reign of Constantine VII (945-959), Muslim prisoners were also invited to banquets that followed the diplomatic receptions given for Muslim envoys.[154]

The emperor Leo VI compiled his *Taktika*, a handbook of strategy and tactics, about 905. He indicates that he did so because the Saracens, like the Persians of old, "cause harm to our subjects every day".[155] Following to some extent the characterization of the Persians by Maurice in the *Strategikon*, Leo describes the Saracens with both admiration for their strengths and advice for exploiting their weaknesses, specifically warning about "the risk of pitched battle, even when it seems perfectly clear that [our forces] far outnumber the enemy".[156] He advocates instead attacking Arab raiders who are "inside the Taurus" when they are returning exhausted and burdened with booty and in narrow passes.[157] In effect Leo VI advocates a "permeable" border. This guerrilla strategy is presented in elaborate detail in the *De velitatione* or *On Skirmishing* written *c.* 975, a presumably anonymous text, but based on writings of the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas.[158]

Kennedy and Haldon note that the second half of the 7th century was crucial for readjustment of Byzantine strategy and military organization in the

150 Laiou, "Economic and Noneconomic Exchange", p. 693.

151 Leo the Deacon, *History*, 5,1.

152 Laiou, "Economic and Noneconomic Exchange", pp. 692-693.

153 Simeonova, "In the Depths of Tenth-Century Byzantine Ceremonial", pp. 75-104.

154 Ramadan, "The Treatment of Arab Prisoners of War in Byzantium, 9th-10th Centuries", p. 175.

155 Leo VI *Tactica*, XVIII 135, ed. Dennis, p. 488.

156 Ibid. XVIII 121, ed. Dennis, p. 482.

157 Ibid. XVIII 128, ed. Dennis, p. 484.

158 Dennis, *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, pp. 137-239; Dagron/Mihaescu, *Le traité sur la guerilla.*

face of both large-scale Muslim offensives and constant raiding expeditions; only periods of internal conflicts within the Caliphate provided some respite.[159] Notable is Muawiyah I's attempt to take Constantinople itself by using the Arab fleet based at Cyzicus as the launch point for attacks from 674-678. Byzantine use of Greek fire was a factor in bringing the siege to an end.[160] Internal problems caused by revolts of Mardaite Christians were also a factor in Muawiyah's agreement to a truce. After 693 long-distance Arab expeditions became less common, and Arab strategy turned to the destruction of Byzantine border defences in hopes of opening the way to Constantinople.[161] A turning point, however, was the failed siege of Constantinople of 717-718 in which a large Arab army marched with an extensive supply train through Asia Minor and coordinated its movements with those of an Arab fleet in an attempt to blockade the city. With the failure of this effort the strategy of outright conquest abated, though border raids continued, many "ritualistic", some more significant. For example the Abbasid invasions under Harun al-Rashid in 782 and 806 resulted first in a truce and then in payment of annual tribute by the Byzantines.[162]

In the late 10th century Leo the Deacon provides a detailed account of the kind of guerrilla warfare described in the *De velitatione*, one quite possibly influenced by that description. In November of 960 the commander Leo Phokas prepared to ambush the famous Hamdanid emir Sayf al-Dawla (Ali ibn Hamdan) at A(n)drassos on the Cappadocian-Cilician border. The historian describes, no doubt with partiality, the Arab forces as leaving Byzantine territory (empty, devastated and consisting only of burnt churches and villages, and ruined fortresses) with a quantity of plunder and captives, wearied by their march, and reaching a narrow and steep section of road, above which the Byzantine forces waited. Many of the Arabs were killed, although Sayf-al-Dawla himself escaped.[163]

The shift, however, to a successful offensive posture on the part of the Byzantines begins to be visible by the 930s and becomes quite definitive by 961. The general John Kourkouas (Domestic of the Schools, 922-944) led forces into Mesopotamia and Armenia beginning in the late 920s; in 934 with a large army he finally took Melitene, which was to remain under Byzantine control until

159 Haldon/Kennedy, "The Arab-Byzantine Frontier", pp. 79-80.

160 Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh* Century, pp. 63-64.

161 Haldon/Kennedy, "The Arab-Byzantine Frontier", p. 82.

162 Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival*, p. 69.

163 Leo the Deacon, *History*, 2, 1-5.

the 11th century.[164] However, until the mid-10th century expansion of the empire was not yet one of full-scale conquest and occupation.[165]

The loss of Crete to the Arabs *c.* 825 and its use as a base for piratical raids[166] was a constant source of frustration to Byzantium. Modest, but short-lived success was achieved in an expedition of 842/43, while subsequent attempts in 911 and 949 were disastrous.[167] A period of imperial expansion clearly begins with the capture of Crete in 961 by the future emperor Nikephoros II Phokas. The contemporary poet Theodosios the Deacon, celebrating this success in his *De Creta capta*, saw it as a prelude to further invasions of Moslem territories.[168] Indeed in 962 Phokas took and sacked Aleppo, the centre of Hamdanid power,[169] securing the eastern border. By 965 Phokas had taken Tarsos,[170] in a battle which exemplifies the effective use of heavy cavalry (cataphracts) as recommended in Phokas' own *Praecepta militaria*,[171] where he also describes their deployment in a blunt-faced wedge.[172] Antioch was taken in 969. Phokas' successor John Tzimiskes campaigned on the eastern front in 972, 974 and 975, finally reaching Damascus. While this campaign did not allow Byzantium to occupy southern Syria, it did provide greater security to Antioch and Byzantine Syria.[173] The long reign of Basil II (975-1025), with its emphasis on the northern and western fronts, provides just two large-scale military efforts on the eastern front. Basil successfully led armies in 995 and 999 against the Fatimids, but with the limited result that the katepanate of Antioch was "recognized as an imperial possession, and a rather shadowy suzerainty over Aleppo was admitted, south of which Fatimid sovereignty was acknowledged".[174] Administration of the eastern front by Basil II and his successors has been characterized as a

164 Trombley, "The Arabs in Anatolia", p. 156.

165 Shepard, "Emperors and Expansionism", p. 70.

166 Christides, "The Raids of the Moslems of Crete", pp. 76-111.

167 Makrypoulias, "Byzantine Expeditions ", pp. 347-62.

168 Inventories of the equipment and manpower for the attempts of 911 and 949 have been preserved (see Haldon, "Theory and Practice", pp. 201-352) and presumably give a general sense of what would have been available to Phokas in 960-961. The description of the armada of 960 reported by Theophanes Continuatus (2000 fire ships, 1000 battle ships, 307 supply ships) is clearly exaggerated; see Christides, *The Conquest of Crete*, pp. 172-175.

169 Garrood, "Byzantine Conquest", pp. 127-40.

170 Bosworth, "The City of Tarsus and the Arab-Byzantine Frontiers", pp. 268-86.

171 McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, pp. 314-15.

172 Ibid., pp. 286-89.

173 Walker, "The 'Crusade' of John Tzimiskes in the Light of New Arab Evidence" pp. 301-27.

174 Farag, "The Aleppo Question", pp. 44-60.

"devolved, tribute-based model" based on "pragmatic fiscal imperatives".[175] He presumably judged the territorial acquisitions of his predecessors adequate for imperial interests.[176]

7 The Seljuk-Turkoman Front (1040-1190)

In the 1040s a new threat, the Seljuk Turks and nomadic Turcoman pastoralists, appeared on the eastern frontier in Armenia. By 1054 Theodosiopolis was threatened, in 1057-8 Melitene fell, as did the unwalled Sebasteia in 1059, and Ani in 1064; in 1066-7 Caesarea was pillaged and in 1067-8 Neocaesarea and Amorion were lost.[177] A number of factors played a role in the Seljuks' rapid advance into Anatolia. Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-55) had required those with obligation of military service (*strateia*) to make tax payments instead, in effect disbanding the armies of Caucasian Iberia, thus "weakening the defences of the eastern borders".[178] Also the attacks came from the Caucasus where a threat was unexpected.[179] Monomachos' subsequent strategy has been described as a "war of attrition", of "holding key positions, while allowing the eastern provinces to absorb the Turkish pressure".[180] With the accession of Romanos Diogenes (1068-71) a new strategy was undertaken, the attempt to confront the invaders at the main point of entry near lake Van at Manzikert. Romanos sought not only to check the Turks, but also to recover territory lost prior to his reign, although his advisors spoke against it.[181] The role of treachery in the famous Byzantine defeat there in 1071 highlights two other factors in the loss of much of Anatolia, the civil wars and use of Turkish mercenaries in them, which weakened resistance and drew the Turks further west. The presence of Turkoman pastoralists seeking new pastures further heightened the pressure.

In the period following Manzikert these factors led to further losses in Anatolia. The use of Turks against the Norman Russell Balliol, whose power centred at Amaseia, compounded the problem. Suleiman ibn Qutlumush's support for the pretenders Nikephoros Botaneiates and then Nikephoros

175 Holmes, "Treaties", p. 150; eadem, "'How the East was Won", pp. 41-56.

176 Cheynet, "Basil II and Asia Minor", p. 31.

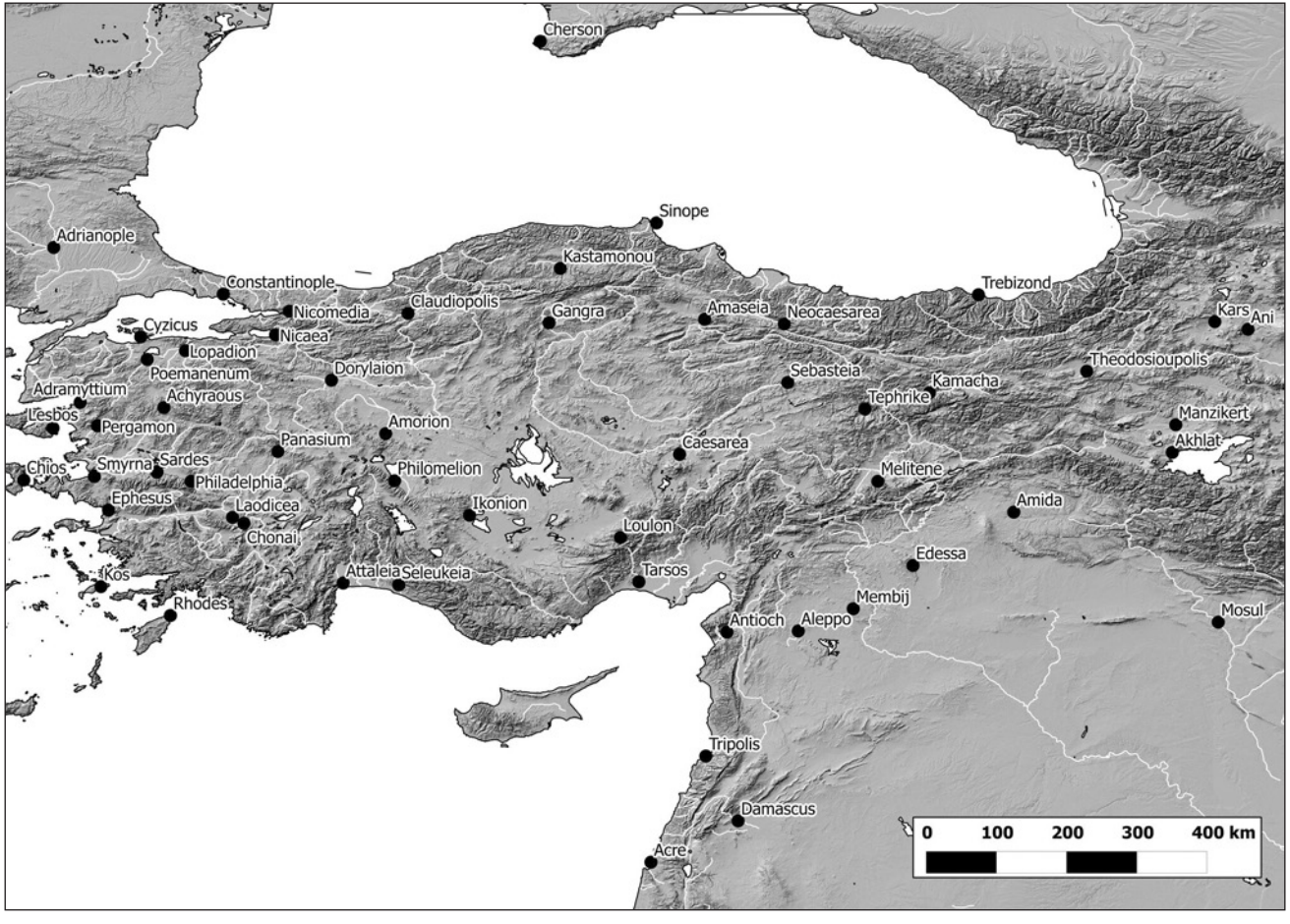
177 Korobeinikov, "Raiders and Neighbors", pp. 272-73.

178 Oikonomides, "The Role of the Byzantine State in the Economy", p. 1022.

179 Korobeinikov, "Raiders and Neighbors", pp. 699-70.

180 Angold, "Belle Époque or Crisis", pp. 607-08.

181 Ahrweiler, "Les forteresses construites en Asie Mineure", p. 183.



MAP 8.4 The Seljuk-Turkoman front.
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Melissenos led first to the presence of Turks on the Asiatic side of the Bosporos and then their possession of Nicaea in 1080. In 1081 Alexios I Komnenos seized power, but the need to deal with the Normans at Dyrrachium and then Pechenegs on the Danube left the situation in Asia Minor initially uncontested. In 1095 Alexios moved troops to Nikomedia but lacked the resources for any expeditions of re-conquest. The First Crusade, however, arrived in 1096 with the initial objective of taking Nicaea, which after a siege surrendered specifically to Alexios. The Crusaders subsequently won a victory over the Turks at Dorylaion, a crucial site on the route to Cilicia near the Anatolian plateau, and by summer had Antioch under siege. Alexios' failure to assist the Crusaders led to the Norman occupation of Antioch after its fall. But in the wake of Dorylaion Byzantine armies retook the Aegean coast, including the Turkish provinces of Phrygia, Ionia and Lydia, with Sardis, Philadelphia and subsequently Attaleia and areas of Cilicia.[182]

Although the reign of John II Komnenos encompassed numerous campaigns, these have been characterized as "not clearly dictated by any pre-existing strategy of territorial expansion", but rather conducted for their propaganda value and because the emperor was "expected to produce victories".[183] Still in the years after his accession John II captured and fortified Laodicea and took and garrisoned Sozopolis. In subsequent years the Danube front occupied his attention. Beginning in 1130 John II campaigned for six years in Paphlagonia; his rebellious brother Isaak's travels in exile in the east seem to have influenced an expedition that recaptured Cilicia but failed to take targeted cities of Syria. John II subsequently campaigned again in Bithynia and began another campaign against Antioch in 1142, but death intervened. By the end of his long career his campaigning had greatly improved the quality of the Byzantine army and he retained control in Cilicia after 1138, However John II was generally unable to maintain most of the territory he had re-conquered.[184]

The reign of Manuel I (1143-1180) saw campaigns in Anatolia similar to those of his father, marked by modest, largely propagandistic, objectives and with little significant territorial gain. A fissure in internal Turkish alliances and incursions into Byzantine territory, for example the seizure of Prakana near Seleukeia in 1144, led to a major expedition led by Manuel in 1146 to the walls of Ikonion, but without significant result.[185] By 1161 Manuel's strategy was to bring the Sultanate of Rum into alliance with Byzantium and to aid it against its

182 Korobeinikov, "Raiders and Neighbors", p. 710.

183 Magdalino, "The Empire of the Komnenoi (1118-1204)", p. 630.

184 Ibid., p. 633.

185 Ibid., p. 637.

Turkish rivals. The sultan Kilij Arslan II agreed to stop raids on Byzantine territory and to turn over major cities recovered from his rivals.[186] Although the sultan ignored the agreements, a relative peace prevailed for almost 15 years. By 1174, however, Arslan's consolidation of power occasioned unsuccessful Byzantine campaigns to Amaseia and Seljuk Paphlagonia in 1175 and the overwhelming defeat by Turkish forces at Myriokephalon in 1176. Even though the Byzantine army remained strong, the balance of power had now changed and diplomacy became even more significant.[187] When Manuel's eleven-year old son Alexios II succeeded him in 1180, the dynastic struggles that followed and the resulting weakness of the empire allowed the Turks to retake significant territory in Anatolia.

The period from the death of Basil II (1025) up to the battle of Manzikert (1071) saw radical change in the Byzantine army. The seasonally recruited provincial troops (thematic militias) were greatly diminished due to financial policies.[188] The full-time mobile, professional imperial regiments (*tagmata*) also began to decline as they were stationed in the provinces.[189] Foreign mercenaries of various nationalities became significantly more numerous[190] in an army where command was centralized in Constantinople.[191] The multicultural army assembled by Romanos Diogenes to fight at Manzikert is illustrative: the army comprised Franks, Oghuz Turk mercenaries, eastern thematic *tagmata*, the five *tagmata* of the West, *tagmata* from the field armies of Syria, troops from Bulgaria and Armenia, Pecheneg mercenaries, as well as palace regiments including Varangians, a total of perhaps 40,000.[192] Ten years later at Dyrrachium Alexios Komnenos commanded a force of perhaps 20,000, including the Thracian and Macedonian *tagmata*, palace guard units including the Varangians, Frankish knights, the so-called corps of Manichaeans, Turkish allied troops, and levees from the Balkan provinces. Byzantine casualties were about 5000 (25%), including most of the Varangians.[193] From the remaining core professional force of perhaps 500 in 1091 (augmented by retainers, nobles and Cuman allies) at the battle of Levounion, Alexios, John and Manuel Komnenos rebuilt the Byzantine army. This consisted still of two main catego-

186 Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, pp. 76-77.

187 Korobeinikov, "Raiders and Neighbors", pp. 716-17.

188 Haldon, *Warfare,* p. 92.

189 Oikonomides, "L'évolution de l'organisation administrative de l'Empire byzantine".

190 Cheynet, "Du stratège de thème au duc", pp. 181-94.

191 Oikonomides, "L'évolution de l'organisation administrative de l'Empire byzantine", pp. 141-47.

192 Haldon, *Byzantine Wars,* pp. 171-72.

193 Ibid., pp. 188-89 and 191.

ries, guard units in the capital and provincial levees. The Varangians remained the most important guard unit.

The Armenian chronicler Aristakes Lastivertsi reports an early "diplomatic" encounter with the Seljuks. In 1055 Tughril Beg sent a letter to the empress Theodora demanding either the return of territory or tribute payments ("every day … one thousand dahekans"). She responded by providing "White horses and mules, many precious gifts and purple garments". Other gifts were subsequently sent and Tughril Beg ceased his attacks.[194] In 1069 a peace treaty was agreed between Alp Arslan, who was more interested in dealing with the Fatamids, and Romanos Diogenes; the latter sought to renew it in 1071, sending an embassy to Arslan who was then besieging Aleppo, offering the exchange of Membij in Syria for Manzikert. Arslan agreed on condition of payment of yearly tribute. However a Turkish raid on Chonai induced Romanos to attempt a military solution that proved to be disastrous.[195] The treaty which followed the battle of Manzikert (1071) called for reparations to the Turks in the form of both immediate and yearly payments apparently over 20 years as well as the ceding of four cities: Edessa, Membij, Antioch and Manzikert; only the last was actually ceded.[196]

The diplomacy of Alexios Komnenos has been analysed in detail by J. Shepard. He finds a set of relatively traditional approaches: liberally conferring titles and gifts (e.g. on the Turkish bey, Tzachas of Smyrna), lavish receptions in the palace and entertainment of foreign potentates (e.g. Abul Qasim, Seljuk governor of Nicaea), ceremonial forms of adoption, and the taking of hostages. A "divide and conquer" strategy was also employed frequently, using internal Turkish rivalries, for example between Abul Qasim and Malik Shah and between Kilij Arslan, Seljuk Sultan of Rum, and Tzachas. His use of threats of a massacre of the Turks by the Crusaders besieging Nicaea accompanied by rich gifts and a promise of amnesty served to intimidate the Turks into surrendering directly to him. While Shepard finds most of the methods employed by Alexios typically Byzantine, he suggests that the emperor's goal of recovering recently-lost territory (as opposed to maintaining the status quo or expanding the empire) and the close combination of such "diplomacy" with personal military campaigning reflect a distinctly personal style.[197]

When John II Komnenos attempted in 1134 to recover the ancestral home of the Komnenoi at Kastamonou, which had been taken by the Danishmendid

194 Aristakès de Lastivert, *Récit des malheurs de la nation arménienne*, pp. 88-89.

195 Korobeinikov, "Raiders and Neighbors", pp. 701-02.

196 Ibid., p. 703.

197 Shepard, "'Father' or 'Scorpion'", pp. 68-132.

Turks, he tried to exploit differences between that group and the sultanate of Ikonion by convincing the latter to act as his allies. Although the sultan initially joined forces with John, the two Turkish groups reconciled and the Konyans deserted before the battle.[198] Nevertheless, in the long run the rivalry between the sultanate of Ikonion and the Danishmendids remained and was beneficial to John.[199] The Komnenian-Seljuk treaty of 1161 provides an excellent example of Manuel I Komnenos employing diplomacy similar to that of his grandfather. In 1161 Kilij Arslan II, the sultan in Ikonion, came to Constantinople in search of aid against his Turkish enemies. He was entertained lavishly for many days, and provided with numerous gifts as well as promised subsequent subsidies. Manuel apparently adopted the sultan as his son and presented him as an imperial retainer, although the terms of the treaty suggest the agreement was an alliance.[200]

Initial attempts to restore fortifications[201] in the face of the Seljuk-Turkoman onslaught are attested for Romanos Diogenes, who shortly before 1071 resettled the city of Theodosiopolis, abandoned since 1054, and provided it with a "ditch and walls" "on account of the unexpected proximity of Turks (διὰ τὴν τῶν Τούρκων ἐκ τοῦ ἀνελπίστου γειτνίασιν).[202] He had also ordered the fortification of Manzikert, although the subsequent defeat rendered the order moot. A new fort (νεοπαγὲς φρούριον), though well behind the frontier, was constructed in the region between the Sangarius and the Halys on the road between Dorylaion and Caesarea. It served as a mobilization point for the gathering of the army assembled by Romanos against the Turks.[203] It is only with the accession of Alexios I Komnenos (1081) that further fortification work began anew. He initially had a fort built on the coast near Nikomedia while the Turks still held that city, perhaps at Helenopolis (Civetot),[204] to serve as base for recovering Nikomedia, sending workmen and materials under the *droungarios* Eustathios while simultaneously entertaining and diverting the Seljuk governor of Nicaea, Abul Qasim, in Constantinople.[205] After the Byzantine recovery of Nikomedia, Alexios personally oversaw construction of a fortress (the "Iron Fort") south of lake Baanes and re-established an old canal to deter Turkoman raids. Anna Komnene described Alexios' personal involvement in the project, overseeing

198 Stone, *John II Komnenos* (*AD 1118-1143*).

199 Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, p. 36.

200 Ibid., pp. 76-77.

201 Fundamental here is Ahrweiler, "Les forteresses construites en Asie Mineure".

202 Michael Attaleiates, *The History*, 20:8.

203 Ahrweiler, "Les forteresses construites en Asie Mineure", p. 183 n. 10.

204 Shepard, "How St James the Persian's Head was Brought to Cormery", pp. 328-29.

205 Ahrweiler, "Les forteresses construites en Asie Mineure", p. 184.

the work and providing the funds for what was to become a "city in front of a city".[206] The *droungarios* Eustathios was also responsible for reconstructing fortifications at Kourikos and Seleukeia, which were not only important against the maritime power of Bohemond, but also against the Turks in Pamphalia.[207]

John II Komnenos built or rebuilt fortifications and fortified camps as bases for his campaigns against the Seljuks; one at Lopadion in Mysia on the Rhyndakos river, built in 1130, was the site of a bridge and major road eastward; significant remains still exist.[208] Another at Achyraous (Ochyra), also in Mysia on a tributary of the Makestos, likewise had strategic importance commanding "the route along the river valley to the plains of Lydia and Ionia".[209] In addition to their military significance, such fortifications created conditions for the recovery of agricultural production.[210] The son and successor of John II, Manuel, earned high praised from Eustathios of Thessaloniki for his fortification activities. In order to secure the Bithynian frontier[211] he built or reconstructed in 1144 or 1145 a fort at Malagina on the Sangarius river and on a major road, himself present for the construction,[212] another at Pithykas in 1146 at the foot of Mount Olympias. Between 1162 and 1173 Manuel drove Turks from the areas around Chliara, Pergamon and Adramyttium, refortified those cities, added strong fortresses in the nearby plains, and created the new theme of Neokastra ("New Forts") with a resulting increase in agricultural production.[213] In 1175 he reconstructed the abandoned fortress at Dorylaion, from which he led troops against the Turkish nomads who tried to stop the construction, and he refortified Soublaion near the source of the Maeander river. The combination of these fortifications, together with others at Arkla and Pylae, has been characterized by Ahrweiler as "une ligne fortifiée dans l'acception modern du terme".[214] His fortification at Dorylaion[215] at an entrance point to the Anatolian plateau and in enemy territory, a base for his planned attack on Ikonion, was heralded by historians, in panegyrics and in poetry.[216]

206 Shepard, "How St James the Persian's Head was brought to Cormery", pp. 330-31.
207 Ahrweiler, "Les forteresses construites en Asie Mineure", p. 185.
208 Foss, "The defences of Asia Minor against the Turks", pp. 159-160.
209 Ibid., pp. 161-62.
210 Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, p. 125.
211 Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus,* 2:4.
212 Foss, "Byzantine Malagina and the Lower Sangarius", pp. 163-64.
213 Ahrweiler, "Les forteresses construites en Asie Mineure", p. 188; Hendy, *Studies*, p. 131.
214 Ahrweiler, "Les forteresses construites en Asie Mineure", p. 186.
215 See Stone, "Dorylaion Revisited", pp. 183-99.
216 Spingou, "A Poem on the Refortification of Dorylaion in 1175", pp. 137-168.

The initial campaigns of Romanos Diogenes against the Seljuks were primarily reactive.[217] In 1068, while he was marching against the Saracens of Aleppo, the Seljuks attacked Neocaesarea. He diverted from his immediate objective in order to confront the Turks near Tephrike and successfully forced them to release prisoners and plunder. In 1069, however, after driving the Turks from territory near Caesarea, Romanos set forth with the intent to take Akhlat on Lake Van in order to secure the Armenian frontier. When Turkish forces defeated the Byzantine army under Philaretos Brachamios protecting the Euphrates, however, Diogenes was forced to retreat. The campaign of 1071 was designed to recover the fortress of Manzikert and confront the invaders on the border; Romanos' refusal to accept Alp Arslan's offer of a treaty favourable to the Byzantines is indicative of the emperor's desire for a decisive victory.[218] In the years after the battle of Manzikert the Turks took control of border areas, which allowed regular incursions. In 1073 Isaak Komnenos tried unsuccessfully to drive the Turks from Cappadocia. Subsequent civil wars saw the use of Turkish mercenaries and their spread further west.

The accession of Alexios I Komnenos in 1081 saw much of Anatolia lost to the Seljuks, including Nicaea now under Suleiman, the sultan of Rum. But the new emperor's attention was taken up with the Normans, Pechenegs and Cumans on the northern and western fronts. Among his earliest military campaigns against the Seljuks was that against Tzachas the emir of Smyrna who had built a fleet and seized Chios, Lesbos, Samos and Rhodes. Although an initial naval expedition failed, a second dislodged Tzachas from Chios, and in 1092 Byzantine naval forces drove him from the islands.[219] The Byzantine fleet also played a significant role in the Crusader siege of Nicaea in 1097, for Byzantine ships transported overland to lake Ascania forced the Seljuks to increase defence of the lake-shore wall and hence to surrender, specifically to surrender to the Byzantines rather than to the Crusaders.[220] A Byzantine army under John Ducas in 1097-1098 took Smyrna, Ephesus, Sardis and Philadelphia, while Alexios I was attacking Turkish cities south of Nicaea. John Ducas' campaign thus restored some Byzantine control in these littoral and agriculturally productive areas. In 1116 Alexios I successfully led an army against Turkish raiders near Poemanenum;[221] in the next year he then advanced into Turkish territory

217 I do not consider here contemporary Komnenian concerns with domination of the Crusader principality of Antioch, which diverted resources from the Turkish front.

218 Treadgold, *History,* 602-04.

219 Ibid., pp. 617-18.

220 Bachrach, "Siege of Nicaea", pp. 249-77.

221 Birkenmeier, *Komnenian Army,* p. 78.

and held his own against the sultan Malik Shah near Philomelium,[222] with a resulting agreement to end Turkish raiding.

John II Komnenos sought to use frequent campaigns, particularly sieges,[223] to reduce Turkish raids and looked to additional conquests to secure the already recovered coastal areas.[224] In 1119 he took Laodicea and in 1120 Sozopolis in response to increased Turkish pressure in the Maeander valley.[225] The need to deal with problems of the northern and western fronts kept him from Anatolia until the 1130s, but in 1132 he took Kastamonou in Paphlagonia (though it was retaken by the Danishmendid Turks) and raided Turkish territory across the Halys river. John retook Kastamonou in 1136 as well as Gangra. In 1139-1140[226] he campaigned on the Black Sea coast; his siege of Neocaesarea was not successful, but his troops did take Trebizond from the rebel Constantine Gabras.

Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180) campaigned against the Turks in Bithynia before turning his attention to Crusader Antioch. In 1146 he responded to raids from sultan Masud of Ikonion. He was successful in two initial encounters and reached Ikonion, but retreated with difficulty when reinforcements arrived from the Danishmendid Turks. The arrival of the Second Crusade saw the Crusaders defeated by the Seljuks at Dorylaion. In 1176 Manuel assembled a large force to go again against Ikonion. The resulting defeat by Turkish forces at Myriokephalon was resolved with an agreement to demolish the fortifications at Soublaion and Dorylaion, although only the former were actually razed. In 1177 Manuel's nephew John Vatatzes destroyed a force of Turkish raiders in the Maeander valley, and the emperor himself drove others from Panasium. Although Manuel I also thwarted a Turkish siege of Claudiopolis in 1179, by September of the following year he was dead.

Eustathios described the Komnenian recovery of coastal Anatolia as a succession of three waves, driving the Turks from the sea, driving them further back, and removing them completely. Magdalino suggests that the locations of the fortifications built by the three emperors testify to the accuracy of this assessment.[227] The subsequent 24 years up to the Fourth Crusade saw no further Byzantine military activity in Asia Minor. Isaak II Angelos made a truce with Kilij Arslan II after a Turkish raid on Neokastra.[228] In 1190 the Third

222 Ibid., p. 79.
223 Ibid., pp. 85-89.
224 Treadgold, *History,* p. 630.
225 Angold, *The Byzantine Empire,* p. 184.
226 Ibid., p. 188.
227 Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, pp. 124-25.
228 Treadgold, *History,* p. 656

Crusade under Frederick Barbarossa was harassed by Turks, marched to Ikonion, and took and sacked it after a fierce battle. The sultan Kilij Arslan II, however, later returned to reclaim his capital; the Byzantines made no further plans to campaign in Anatolia.

8 The Western Front: Part I, Justinian

"Africa and countless other provinces restored to Roman jurisdiction…bear witness to the victories granted to us by the will of heaven".[229] This and other statements of Justinian suggest a political-ideological component for the offensive operations in North Africa, Italy and Spain during his reign. The Arianism of the Vandals and Goths was also a partial motivation.[230] There were in addition more immediate factors.[231] In 533-534 Belisarius led a successful expedition against the Vandals, although the province was not fully secured until 548. In 535 Belisarius invaded Sicily, then took Naples and Rome in 536 and Ravenna in 540 from the Ostrogoths. In related operations and after initial success and reversal Dalmatia and its capital Salona were finally secured in 539-540 by Constantinianus.[232] Problems on the Persian front intervened and most of Italy was lost to the Ostrogoths until 554-556 when Narses secured the peninsula. In 552 Byzantine forces arrived in Visigothic Spain and secured an area on the southeast coast including Cartagena by 555.

In addition to the army organization for the period noted above,[233] the role of the Byzantine navy is particularly prominent in western operations. Procopius records for Belisarius' North African expedition 500 transport ships accompanied by 92 war ships (*dromons*) with 30,000 sailors, carrying 10,000 infantry, 5000 cavalry and Belisarius' personal retainers.[234] The fleet was also essential for the invasion of and continuing operations in Sicily, Italy, and Spain.

The conclusion of the "Eternal Peace" with Persia in 532 allowed Justinian to shift resources to the West. Procopius records that he accompanied Belisarius on the expedition to North Africa and was personally sent to Syracuse,

229 Justinian, *Institutes,* preface, Nov. 21, 533, trans. P. Birks/McLeod, G., *Justinian's Institutes*, Ithaca 1987.

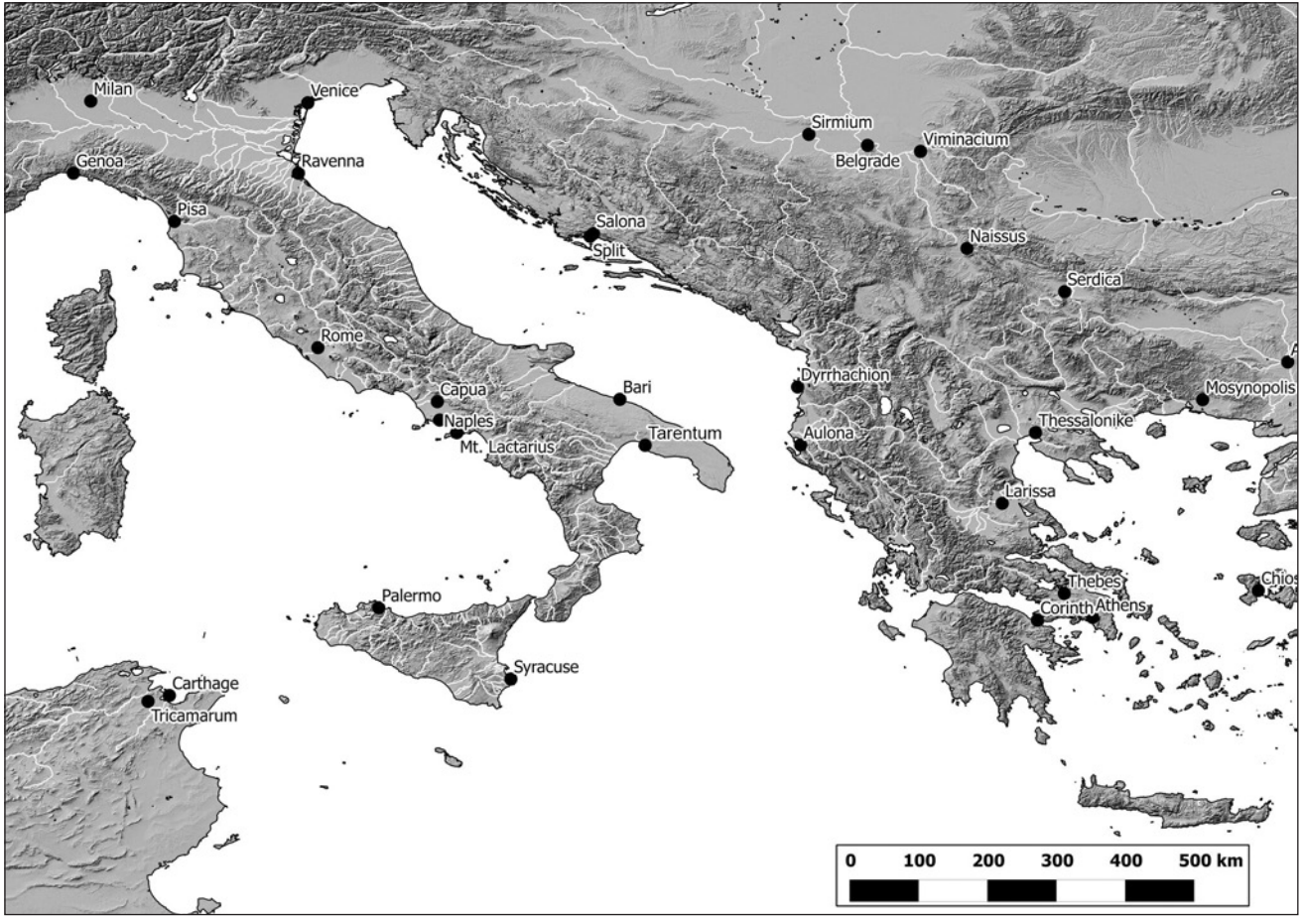
230 Moorhead, "Western Approaches (500-600)", pp. 201-02.

231 Haldon, *Warfare,* p. 35; see also above p. 263.

232 Martindale, *Prosopography,* pp. 334-35.

233 See above p. 266.

234 Procopius, Wars, ed. Dewing, III.11; Pryor/Jeffreys, *The Age of the ΔΡΟΜΩΝ*, pp. 14-15.



MAP 8.5 The Western front.
MAP DESIGNED BY DR JOHANNES PREISER-KAPELLER

ostensibly to purchase provisions, but in fact to seek information on Vandal deployments. He learned that the Byzantine offensive was unknown in Carthage and that their fleet was absent, sent to suppress a revolt in Sardinia.[235] Procopius also notes that on his march to Carthage Belisarius "by displaying great gentleness and kindness, won the Libyans to his side so completely that thereafter he made the journey as if in his own land".[236] Justinian engaged in extensive negotiations with the Ostrogoths at Ravenna (Amalasuntha and Theodahad) for the peaceful surrender of Italy through various emissaries including Peter Patrikios.[237] Offers to each of them of comfortable retirement in the East in return for surrender of Italy were unsuccessful.[238] The negotiations may also have been an attempt to overthrow Theodahad.[239]

While construction of major fortifications is less significant for offensive forces, examples are still in evidence. After taking Carthage Belisarius had a ditch dug and stockade constructed around the circuit-wall and repaired the walls themselves.[240] In preparing for the Goth siege of Rome he had the Aurelian walls repaired and a wide ditch dug. Procopius indicates he "constructed each merlon of the battlement with a wing, adding a sort of flanking wall on the left side, in order that those fighting from the battlement against their assailants might never be hit by missiles thrown by those storming the wall on their left".[241] Also at Rome he had a tower with gates built to defend a bridge.[242] The Goth commander Gripas abandoned Salona due to the severely deteriorated condition of the walls, and Constantianus, upon taking the city, had them hastily rebuilt.[243]

Belisarius' African campaign was characterized by swift victories at Ad Decimum in September and Tricamarum in December 533; Carthage was taken and king Gelimer eventually captured. In 535 Belisarius landed in Sicily, then proceeded to take Naples and Rome (December, 536), successfully defended the latter against a Gothic siege (537-538), and in 540 entered Ravenna. The 540s were characterized by Goth successes, but in 552 Narses defeated the Goths at Busta Gallorum[244] and again at Mons Lactarius and in

235 Procopius, Wars, ed. Dewing, III.14.

236 Ibid., III.17.

237 On Peter see above p. 266.

238 Procopius, Wars, ed. Dewing, V:3-7.

239 Frankforter, "Amalasuntha, Procopius, and a Woman's Place", pp. 41-57.

240 Procopius, Wars, ed. Dewing, III.23.

241 Ibid., V.14.15.

242 Ibid., V.17.14.

243 Ibid., I.7.

244 Haldon, *Byzantine Wars,* pp. 35-38.

554 Narses defeated a Gothic allied contingent of Franks and Alemanni at the Casilinus river near Capua.[245] It was not until 562, however, until the last Goth and Frank bastions were secured.

9 The Western Front Part II: Normans and Hungarians (1071-1186)

In 1071 Robert Guiscard brought the presence of Byzantium in Italy to an end with the capture of Bari, the capital of the katepanate of Italy. In 1081 Guiscard and his son Bohemond attacked Illyria, first taking Corfu, then besieging Dyrrachium that fell in 1082, and finally invading Macedonia and Thessaly. Alexios Komnenos eventually defeated Bohemond at Larissa[246] and the Normans withdrew to Italy. Bohemond unsuccessfully besieged Dyrrachium again in 1107. In 1147 Norman forces seized Corfu and pillaged Thebes and Corinth; they were driven from Corfu in 1149 with German assistance. In 1185-1186 the Normans attacked Dyrrachium and Thessalonica and marched on Constantinople. Byzantine victories drove them back, but they kept a presence on the eastern Adriatic coast.[247] Tensions over territory in the north-western Balkans between the Hungarians and Byzantium were a feature of the 1150s and 1160s with numerous Byzantine military expeditions. The Byzantine victory at Sirmium[248] in 1167 established Byzantine control over Dalmatia.

In 1074 the emperor Michael VII Doukas proposed marriage between his son and a daughter of Robert Guiscard in hopes of gaining Norman aid against the Turkomans. When Michael was subsequently deposed the arrangement was nullified, but served as a pretext for Guiscard to invade.[249] Alexios Komnenos in anticipation of the Norman attack on Dyrrachium (1081) successfully sought naval assistance from Venice with "promises and gifts" confirmed with pledges, including significant titles for the doge Domenico Silvio.[250] In 1104 he arranged the marriage of a daughter of the late Hungarian king to the heir to the throne, John II Komnenos, to create an alliance and prevent Bohemond from attacking from the north.[251] In 1147 Manuel I confirmed trading privileges in return for

245 Ibid., pp. 38-42.

246 Stephenson, "Balkan Borderlands (1018-1204)", p. 679.

247 Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier,* p. 288.

248 Haldon, *Byzantine Wars,* pp. 193-95.

249 Kolia-Dermitzaki, "Byzantine-Norman Marriage Negotiations", pp. 269-73; Panagopoulou, *ΟΙ ΔΙΠΛΩΜΑΤΙΚΟΙ ΓΑΜΟΙ,* pp. 224-33.

250 Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier,* pp. 168 and 170.

251 Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier,* pp. 180-81; Panagopoulou, *ΟΙ ΔΙΠΛΩΜΑΤΙΚΟΙ ΓΑΜΟΙ,* pp. 236-42.

Venetian naval assistance against the Normans holding Corfu.[252] In 1148 Manuel arranged a marriage between a cousin of Frederick I Barbarossa and a daughter of Andronikos Komnenos. The couple served in resolving differences between the two empires.[253]

Anna Komnene describes the fortifications of Dyrrachium in 1106 as characterized by walls wide enough for four horsemen to ride abreast, interspersed with battlemented towers with spiral staircases that rose eleven feet above the wall. Regarding the earlier defence preparation in 1081 she notes (*Alexiad* III.9) that Alexios sent George Palaeologos to Dyrrachium with instructions to prepare the wooden parapets to collapse should Normans mount them on scaling ladders. In addition, Palaeologos displayed the flexibility often recommended in the military manuals by constructing a wooden tower and beam on the fortifications to oppose a Norman siege tower and successfully block the opening of its drawbridge (*Alexiad* IV:4). In 1106 he had the mountain passes blocked with barricades of felled timber to hinder the Norman advance.[254] As the Normans approached Constantinople in 1185/6 the emperor Andronikos had all the homes against the city's land walls demolished to increase security.[255]

A number of battles against the Normans and Hungarians evidence a Byzantine willingness to engage in direct confrontation. At Dyrrachium in 1081 Alexios Komnenos choose to engage Robert Guiscard despite suggestions from senior advisors to wait and despite the fact that Robert had learned of his arrival and repositioned his army. Alexios was defeated with significant losses.[256] In 1155 Manuel I invaded southern Italy with the aim of taking those coastal towns that were formerly Byzantine with Greek inhabitants, in an effort to deter further Norman invasions. After considerable initial success the campaign ended at Brindisi in 1156, due in part to the Byzantine failure to secure German support.[257] In 1167 Manuel I dispatched Andronikos Kontostephanos to bring Hungarian forces to a pitched battle. He did so with great success at Sirmium resulting in a treaty favourable to the Byzantines and security on the north-western front.[258] In 1185 after the Normans besieged Thessalonica and marched toward Constantinople, Isaak II Angelos sent Alexios Branas against

252 Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier,* p. 223.

253 E. and M. Jeffreys, "The Wild Beast from the West", in A. Laiou/Mottahedeh, R. (eds.), *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslin World,* Washington DC 2001, pp. 101-116; Papagopoulou, *ΟΙ ΔΙΠΛΩΜΑΤΙΚΟΙ ΓΑΜΟΙ,* pp. 276-86.

254 Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier,* p. 181

255 Ibid., p. 287

256 Haldon, *Byzantine Wars,* pp. 187-92.

257 Magdalino, "The Empire of the Komnenoi (1118-1204)", pp. 638-39.

258 Haldon, *Byzantine Wars,* pp. 193-95.

them. He successfully attacked the divided Norman forces first at Mosynopolis, then on the Strymon inflicting heavy casualties and forcing the Norman abandonment of Thessalonica and retreat to Dyrrachium.[259]

10 The Fourth Crusade 1203-04

The passage of the massive number of participants of the First Crusade through Byzantine territory in 1096-97 posed a significant danger to the empire. The diplomacy of Alexios I Komnenos successfully managed the threat with the added benefit of Crusader assistance in retaking from the Turks both Nicaea and the western coast of Asia Minor. The Fourth Crusade, however, by the time it left Zara had Constantinople as its objective and the civil unrest that followed the death of Manuel I and the exhaustion of the treasury left the city with few strategies to defend itself against this new danger. In 1197 the emperor Alexios III Angelos had attempted to buy off Henry VI of Hohenstaufen's threats against Byzantium. Alexios IV Angelos made extravagant financial promises to the leaders of the Fourth Crusade for support of his claim to the throne, promises beyond Byzantium's ability to pay. In 1203 Alexios III fled the city with as much of its wealth as he could transport.[260] The restored emperor Isaak II Angelos. in elaborate and lavish negotiations with the Crusaders, agreed to terms, both financial and otherwise, of which he reportedly said, "I do not really see how we can put them into effect".[261] The empire's ability to pay the enemy to go away was exhausted.

In 1203 the Crusaders had been able to break the chain preventing entry into the Golden Horn and thus gained access to the sea walls.[262] In 1204 the special wooden defences added on top of the sea walls proved ineffective in preventing the Venetians from landing men on the walls from flying bridges atop ships.[263] Others breached a bricked-up postern gate and then opened a main gate from the inside.[264]

The Byzantine forces significantly outnumbered those of the Crusaders. Yet at the Crusaders' initial amphibious landing on Galata the Greek forces quickly

259 Treadgold, *History,* p. 656; Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier,* pp. 287-88.
260 Magdalino, "The Empire of the Komnenoi (1118-1204)", pp. 651-53
261 Phillips, *Fourth Crusade,* p. 188
262 Queller/Madden, *Fourth Crusade,* pp. 117-18.
263 Phillips, *Fourth Crusade,* p. 249
264 Queller/Madden, *Fourth Crusade,* p. 182-83.

fled.[265] Alexios III led a massive force through the St. Romanos gate to confront the Crusaders, yet at a crucial point he withdrew without attacking and re-entered the city. When the second Crusader landed on the sea walls the Byzantine garrison, after initial unsuccessful attempts to kill him, retreated to a lower level of the tower;[266] a similar retreat took place at the breached postern gate when a Crusader entered virtually without opposition.[267]

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CHAPTER 9

Naval Warfare: Military, Institutional and Economic Aspects

Salvatore Cosentino

1 Byzantium and the Sea: Geographical and Cultural Premises

The physical environment in which the Byzantine Empire evolved is the aspect that was most favourable to the creation of a war fleet. Its coastal territories stretched for a total length of over 20,000 km. Maritime space with a strategic and economic interest for the empire amounted to more than 650,000 square kilometres, and that only considers the Aegean and the Black Sea.[1] The former was populated by dozens of islands, of different dimensions, which made navigation in it safer and easier than in the rest of the Mediterranean.[2] Several large navigable rivers flowed into the Black Sea, including the Danube, which, for various periods of Byzantine history, constituted the northern border of the empire. Some coastal regions of the heartland, such as Epirus, Macedonia, Bithynia, Pontus and several islands (such as Rhodes, Cyprus, Thasos, and Karpathos) were a reservoir of timber for shipbuilding.[3] As it is natural to expect, given the features of its geographical environment, the Eastern Roman Empire had an important navy between the 6th to the 12th centuries. The Byzantines were very well aware of this. The sole medieval sovereign to take part in an important naval battle was Constans II (641-668). Two high officials of the fleet, Tiberius III Apsimaros (698-705) and Romanus I Lecapenus (920-944), were able to ascend to the throne. At the zenith of the development of the Byzantine marine, emperor Nikephoros I Phokas (963-968) could proudly claim his military superiority over the seas before Liutprand of Cremona, the ambassador sent to him by Otto I: "I alone have the dominion of

1 On the "Marimität" of the Byzantine Empire, see Koder, *Lebensraum*, p. 17. On the Mediterranean as a fundamental space for food resources: Marzano, *Havesting the Sea*.

2 Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea*, p. 126; Arnaud, *Routes*, pp. 29-33.

3 Haldon, *Atlas of Byzantine History*, p. 5, map. 1.4.

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the sea".[4] A century later, Kekaumenos re-echoed the words of the emperor, by affirming in an often-quoted passage, that "the fleet is the glory of the empire".[5]

However, if we broaden our overview to the overall field of naval warfare, we would rapidly realize that this story can be narrated only in the space of a contradiction. On the one hand, the physical environment of the empire and its strategic priorities in the defence of its territories exalted the role of the fleet. On the other, in the Byzantine mentality the sea and maritime life were related to feelings of distress and fear.[6] This reflected upon the organization of the navy and military considerations connected with it. Firstly, it was always difficult for Byzantium to recruit crews because of the harshness of the life on board, and some of them were recruited from specific ethnic groups. Secondly, service in the navy was always considered to be less prestigious than that in the army. Thirdly, military leaders were afraid to wage war at sea due to the nautical and astronomical expertise it entailed. This fact is stressed by Syrianos *magistros* in his treatise, where he emphasises that the commander of a fleet must always have with him people who know the art of navigation.[7] Emperor Leo VI too includes maritime and astronomical knowledge among the competences of a naval *stratēgos*.[8] Byzantine military literature devoted to navy and naval warfare is consistently inferior to that concerning army, sieges and fortifications. Setting apart the chapter on the *diabasis potamōn* (or "how to cross rivers") included in the *Stratēgikon*,[9] such literature is limited, in practice, to the sole composition by Syrianos and the XIX constitution by Leo the Wise.[10] It is not by chance that the only technical writing concerning nautical meteorology handed down to us was penned by an anonymous *stratēgos tōn Kibyrrhaiōtōn*, namely the command of the most important naval regional formation of the middle Byzantine empire.[11]

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4 Liutprand, *The Embassy to Constantinople*, 11, ed. J. Becker, *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana* (MGH, *Scriptores ad usum scholarum*, 41), Hannoverae 1915, p. 182.

5 Cecaumenos, *On strategy* 292. 19 ed. Litavrin.

6 Cosentino, "Mentality", pp. 65-6.

7 Syrianus, *Naval battles* 5.1.

8 Leo, *Naval Warfare* 2 = Leo VI Tactica XIX 2, ed. Dennis.

9 Mauricius, *On strategy* 12 B. 21. For a commentary, see Cosentino, "Come i Bizantini" and Dimitroukas, *Ναυμαχικά*, pp. 89-91, 270-2.

10 Syrianus, *Naval battles* and the commentary by Dimitroukas, *Ναυμαχικά*, pp. 102-9, 272-6; for Leo, *Naval Warfare* and the commentaries by Dimitroukas, *Ναυμαχικά,* pp. 24-35, 251-70 and Haldon, *Commentary*, pp. 389-417.

11 Editions in *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*, II, *Codices Venetos* descripserunt G. Kroll et A. Olivieri, Bruxellis 1900, 214-216 and by S. Lampros, "Τρία κείμενα συμβάλλοντα εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν τοῦ ναυτικοῦ παρὰ τοῖς Βυζαντίνοις", *Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων* 11

Since Antiquity the social milieu of ports, ships and crews had been viewed with suspicion by the elites, because it was pervaded by cosmopolitism, democratisation (in an etymological sense) and the search for economic gain.[12] Under several aspects, maritime life collided with the ethos of the Byzantine aristocracy, marked by concepts of order, stability and economic self-sufficiency. Service in the navy was not attractive to the magnates, both because of the physical promiscuity it entailed with crews, and the peril it provoked in situations of clashes. As a matter of fact, a battle at sea, much more than a battle on land, deprived the ruling class from the opportunity to escape the enemies, or negotiating with them. This perspective seems to be evoked in an anonymous 10th-century text, possibly written by a young member of the household of Basil *patrikios* and *parakoimōmenos*, which is part of the collection called as *Naumachica*.[13] In his preface the author seems to prize naval warfare because in it the fate of the noble is identical to that of the humble;[14] and it is exactly this sort of social solidarity between classes, characterizing the life on board, which was unattractive to the Byzantines. One can conclude, therefore, that if environment and strategic priorities determined, on the part of the empire, the constitution and maintenance of a powerful fleet from the 7th to the 12th century, at the same time, this massive investment in ships, men, and naval infrastructures, was never able to provoke in Byzantium a cultural and military epic on the war at sea.

2 The Navy and Its Operational Framework: An Overview

During the early and middle Byzantine ages the navy had a large geographical range stretching from the Tyrrhenian to the Black Sea. Beginning with the end of the 11th century, the range of its activity was confined progressively to the Eastern Mediterranean, whereas under the Palaeologans it was focused on the northern Aegean and the Sea of Marmara. The Black Sea was often visited by the Byzantine warships, on the occasion of the military operations against the Bulgars or for reaching the distant Cherson. However, it was seen as a marginal front in the context of naval warfare due to the fact that the empire never

(1912), pp. 174-77; for a comment on this text see Dolley, "Meteorology", pp. 5-10, 13-6 (English translation) and Dagron, "Firmament", pp. 145-56, 148-9 (German translation).

12 Cosentino, "Mentality", p. 66.

13 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 185, 522-45 (text).

14 Ibid., p. 525.

coped with true maritime powers there. For this reason, the present overview will concentrate exclusively on the Mediterranean space.

Scholars have for a long time made it clear that the affirmation by Vegetius, according to whom there was little to say about the Roman navy of his days because the empire at time had no enemy on the sea, is a simplification of historical reality.[15] If it was true that at the end of the 4th century (or the beginning of the 5th) the big regional fleets of the Principate had been dismantled, the Roman navy did not disappear. Rather, it had undergone a deep transformation: modifying its size, ships and strategic function.[16] Its activities during Late Antiquity focused on the patrolling of the big navigable rivers, such as the Rhine or the Danube, and on supporting the operation of the army.[17] During the reign of Justinian the campaigns against the Vandals and the Ostrogoths, as well as those against the Visigoths in southern Spain, were made possible thanks to the participation of meaningful naval forces. In North Africa the regiments and baggage train were carried by 500 transport ships; there were also 92 galleys on which 2,000 soldiers (*auteretai*) embarked.[18] These ships were called *dromōnes* by Procopius, and they were a relatively new type of warship, which fitted well with the strategic tasks assigned to the navy in Late Antiquity.[19]

That the navy was operating perfectly in the first half of the 7th century is demonstrated by the way with which the Byzantines reacted to the first Muslim conquests in Syria and Palestine. The control of the coastal towns was much more difficult for the invaders than control of the heartland.[20] As a matter of fact, several episodes prove that the navy was more efficient than the army which faced the Muslim assaults.[21] However, the birth of Islam had profound

15 Vegetius, *On Warfare* 4.1, ed. F. Stelten, New York 1990 (see also the edition and commentary of the section on *Naval warfare* by D. Baatz/R. Bochius, *Vegetius und die römische Flotte. Flavius Vegetius Renatus, Praecepta belli navalis, Ratschläge für die Seekriegführung*, Mainz 1997, p. 8). The problematic date of Vegetius's treatise (whether at the end of the reign of Theodosius I or during Valentinian III's rulership) is irrelevant for the purposes of the present paper. Courtois, "Politiques navales", p. 259 and Starr, *Navy*, pp. 197-8, argued for a decline of the navy forces in Late Antiquity; of the same view was Gigli, "La flotta", even though he stressed the fundamental role that the late Roman fleet played in the defence of the frontiers.

16 See the arguments by Kienast, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 125-57 and, especially by Reddé, *Mare Nostrum*, p. 605 ff. Contra: Zuckerman, *Byzantine Dromon*, pp. 57-63.

17 Reddé, *Mare Nostrum*, pp. 288-308, 597-605.

18 Procopius, *Vandal War* 1.11.15-16.

19 On the structural characteristics of the *dromōn*, see below.

20 See Donner, *Conquests*, pp. 152-5.

21 Cosentino, "Constans II", p. 584.

repercussions on the organisation and strategic function of the Byzantine fleet. In 643/644 Mu'āwiya, the provincial governor of Syria and Palestine (and future caliph), asked caliph 'Umar (634-644) for permission to build a fleet, but his request was rejected. It was granted by 'Umar's successor, 'Uthmān (644-654), at the beginning of his governance.[22] Consequently, the Muslims began organising the construction of their own marine. The main dockyards on the Syro-Palestinian coast were Acre, Tyre and especially Tripoli;[23] in Egypt, the biggest arsenal was Alexandria, to which Damietta and Rosetta were added in the 8th century.[24] Perhaps scholars have underestimated the awareness showed by the Umayyads in considering the fleet as a pivotal military instrument for the conquest of Constantinople. From the 650s up to the 720s, three attempts were made to capture the Byzantine capital by making use of a powerful naval force: in 654, 668-674 and 717-718.[25] Such expeditions were often preceded by the occupation of those Greek islands (Cyprus, Rhodes, Kos, Crete) or imperial naval bases (Attaleia, Smyrna, Kyzikos), which were located along the route from Syria and Egypt to the sea of Marmara.[26] The operations

22 Ibid., p. 583, n. 45.

23 Fahmy, *Organisation*, pp. 51-6; Id., *Sea-Power*, pp. 69-71; Lombard, "Arsenaux", pp. 107-13.

24 Fahmy, *Organisation*, pp. 27-35.

25 The Muslim attack against Constantinople of 654, though not accepted by all scholars (e.g. Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 25, n. 34), is supported both by the testimony of Sebeos and by that of an anonymous apocalyptical text of uncertain date: *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*, II, *Commentary* (by J. Howard-Johnston), pp. 274-6; O'Sullivan, "Sebeos' account", pp. 67-88; Zuckerman, "Learning", 114-5; Cosentino, "Constans II", pp. 590-3; Id., "L'assedio arabo", pp. 91-7; Petersen, *Siege Warfare*, pp. 659-661; Haldon, *The Empire*, p. 138 seems to believe in the historicity of the assault of 654. The second attack has recently been the subject of a long and detailed study by Jankowiak, "First siege", in which, while he dismissed the question of when the "first" Arab assault against the second Rome really happened, he convincingly argued that a second siege against her had already begun in 668-669, not in 672 or 674. However, in his reappraisal, Jankowiak ends up "forcing" and minimizing Theophanes' evidence. From it, it is possible to maintain that the second attack was a long military episode lasting seven years (668-674), as stated by Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6165, p. 354, l. 5 and as has already been underlined by some scholars. Doubts on the chronology proposed by Jankowiak have been raised by Prigent, "De pères et des fils", pp. 603-610. On the siege of 668-674, see Karapli, "First siege" and Petersen, *Siege Warfare*, pp. 675-8. As far as the third Muslim attack against the Byzantine capital is concerned, see Christides, "The second Arab siege" and Petersen, *Siege Warfare*, pp. 700-1, 703-08. Zampaki, "Muslim Navy", pp. 12-4 speaks of fourth attacks (655, 668-669, 674-680, 715-717).

26 Islands: Fahmy, *Sea-Power*, pp. 84-85; Bosworth, "Arab attacks", 158; Beihammer, "Arab campaigns", pp. 47-68; Imbert, "Graffiti arabes", pp. 752-754; Tsougarakis, *Crete*, p. 23, 25-7.

against the islands were undertaken by the Arabs with a twofold purpose: on the one hand, they aimed at providing themselves with essential places for the supplying of water and foodstuff; on the other, they wanted to prevent grain supplies being sent from the islands to Constantinople.

In response to the naval assaults of the Umayyads, the imperial government reacted by strengthening the fleet in various ways. Constans II took the unprecedented decision to lead in person the Byzantine formation that, in the early summer of 654, engaged the Muslim fleet that was sailing to Constantinople in battle off Phoinix, in Lycia.[27] The clash turned out to be a disaster for the Byzantines, and the same emperor was able to escape only thanks to a stratagem. However, the attack against Constantinople failed. The same Constans II, or his son, Constantine IV, reorganised the navy, giving it an unified command.[28] During the most difficult phase of the second assault against Constantinople, in 672-674, the Imperials experimented with a new weapon for the first time, the so-called "Greek fire".[29] In 698 a large expeditionary naval force, under the command of the *patrikios* John, was sent to Carthage in order to reconquer the city from the Arabs, who had occupied it since 697.[30] The campaign failed; on its way back, in Crete the expeditionary corps proclaimed a high official of the fleet as emperor, a certain Apsimaros, who ascended to the throne under the name of Tiberius II.[31] A second *coupe d'état* broke out in 715, when a pre-emptive naval attack ordered by Anastasius II, with the aim of destroying the Muslim fleet anchored in Lycia, provoked the rebellion of the Byzantine naval forces assembled in Rhodes, who elected Theodosius III as emperor.[32] The latter, in his turn, was deposed on March 717 by Leo, the leader of the Anatolian army, who successfully organized the defence of Constantinople on the

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Naval bases: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 353 (Cyzicus, Smyrna, Lycia and Cilicia).

27 Latest accounts of the battle with all previous bibliography: Cosentino, "Constans II", pp. 586-9; Christides, "Dhāt Al-Ṣawāri", pp. 513-31 (who does not take into account the context leading up to the battle).

28 Antoniadis-Bibicou, *Études*, p. 79 and Cosentino, "Constans II", p. 602 opt for Constans II; Leontsini, *Κωνσταντίνος Δ΄*, pp. 150-8, following Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 22, opts for Constantine IV. Zuckerman, *Byzantine dromon*, pp. 69-72, thinks that there was no fleet before the 660s; its creation, according to this author, was a consequence of the creation of the Arab navy in the early 650s.

29 On the "Greek fire", see above, footnote 211.

30 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 28.

31 Ibid., p. 28.

32 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 26; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 31.

occasion of the third siege led by Maslama ibn ʿAbd al-Malik.[33] After this success, the fleet of the Kibyrrhaiōtai gained another great victory against the Arabs around 747, off the coast of Cyprus.[34]

Muslims had begun to threaten the western territories of the empire since the second half of the seventh century. It is possible that an attack against Sicily was conducted as early as 653.[35] More or less in coincidence with the assassination of Constans II in Syracuse and the beginning of the second siege of Constantinople, Arab raids struck Sardinia and Sicily, in 666/667 and 669-670 respectively.[36] The conquest of Carthage by Ḥassān ibn al-Nuʿmān in 697 exposed the Byzantine islands in the West (Sicily, Sardinia and the Balearics) to a more direct threat. Sicily was raided in 705, 720-21, 727-728, 739, and 752;[37] Sardinia in 703-4, 705-6, 707-8, 710-711, 732, 735, and 752.[38] However, Muslim naval activity seemed to experience a slowdown in the second half of the 8th century, both in the East and in the West, due to the internecine strife that struck the Islamic world from 749.[39]

The situation changed completely in the 9th and 10th centuries, which represented a period of renewed and enduring conflicts between Byzantium and Islam. As far as naval warfare is concerned, this era presents different characteristics in comparison with the first wave of Muslim conquests. Whereas in the earlier period the Muslim naval efforts aimed at conquering Constantinople, now the confrontation between the two powers underwent a strong regionalisation, being deprived of any wide strategic uniformity. This also happened because the Muslim empire during the 9th century fragmented into a multiplicity of large interregional dominions. Even Byzantium in the same period experienced political, social, and religious transformations, such as the rebellion of Thomas the Slave, the end of the Iconoclasm or the substitution of the Amorian dynasty with the Macedonian household, but they were not

33 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 31-2; Petersen, *Siege Warfare*, pp. 700-8.

34 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 37; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 33.

35 The historicity of the raid has been contested by Stratos, "Olympius", but accepted by several scholars, among whom are included Amari, Vasiliev, Lewis and Eickhoff, and recently by Jankowiak "First siege", p. 310 (n. 337). Woods, "Olympius", thinks that the Saracens mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis* are to be identified with the Zarakianoi of the Mauretania.

36 Sardinia: Kaegi, "Gigthis", pp. 161-67; idem, "Byzantine Sardinia", esp. 5-11; idem, "Interrelationship", p. 22. Sicily: Jankowiak, "First siege", p. 314, n. 359 (with quotations from the relevant sources).

37 Amari, *Biblioteca*, II, pp. 2-4.

38 This chronology has been worked out from Stasolla, "Sardegna", pp. 79-92.

39 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 33.

comparable, politically, with those which happened in the contemporary Muslim world.

The multi-targeted strategy of Islam in the 9th century resulted in a direct conquest of several important islands and places along the maritime border of the Byzantine Empire. Between 823 and 827,[40] a group of Andalusians exiled led by Abū Ḥafṣ set sail from Egypt to Crete, probably disembarking in the southern part of the island.[41] The court reacted vehemently to the invasion by sending four expeditions to the island between 828 and 843, but none of them achieved any lasting result. In the 820s, an army sent from Tunisia by Ziyādat Allāh I at the invitation of the *tourmarchēs* Euphemios (who had rebelled against the emperor), landed at Mazara, in southern Sicily.[42] The conquest of Sicily took much longer for the Muslims than Crete had done, but it can be seen as being virtually accomplished in 878, with the capture of Syracuse. Sardinia was sacked by the Aghlabids in 807, 809, 813, 816-17, and 821-22;[43] moreover, the occupation of Sicily made the contacts between Sardinia and Constantinople extremely difficult. Malta was occupied in 868.[44] In this new situation the Aegean islands (Thasos, Cyclades) and southern Italy (Brindisi, Taranto, Bari) were much more exposed to Muslim incursions. With the exception of Rhodes, in the 9th century the only large island remaining in imperial hands was Cyprus. It seems that the latter had been demilitarised, but since the second half of the 8th century sigillography witnesses the presence in it of several high military officials from abroad (two *droungarioi*, one *stratēgos tōn Trakēsiōn*, one *stratēgos tēs Sikelias*, and one *stratēgos tōn Kibyrrhaiōtōn* are quoted).[45] This reveals a military interest from Constantinople towards Cyprus that increased after the fall of Crete. It was in this context that the strategic function of this island changed, by becoming more and more important for the defensive strategy of the Empire in the Eastern Mediterranean.[46]

40 The date of the disembarkation by Abū Ḥafṣ's forces is disputed: see Christides, *Conquest*, pp. 85-8; Tsougarakis, *Crete*, pp. 30-45; Treadgold, *Revivial*, pp. 251-7; Malamut, *Îles*, I, pp. 72-9; Christides, "The cycle", pp. 22-3.

41 See Gigourtakis, "«Ἀκρωτηρίῳ τῷ Χάρακι»", who has convincingly argued that the disembarkation must have taken place along the coast between modern Tsoutsouros and Keratokampos.

42 Prigent, "La carrière".

43 Stasolla, "Sardegna".

44 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 40.

45 Metcalf, *Lead Seals*, nos. 152, 154, 269, 270-272.

46 As was clearly stressed by Lounghis, *Byzantium*, passim; even the idea of the so-called "treaty centuries" has been recently challenged: Zavagno "At the edge", pp. 124, 130-4.

Byzantium tried to cope with this precarious situation with the best of its forces. During the first half of the 9th century two new naval themes were created, the Aigaion Pelagos and Samos.[47] Four attempts were made to reconquer Crete in less than 15 years.[48] Byzantine resistance in Sicily was strong; in 858 a fleet was sent to relieve the island, but it failed in its purpose.[49] The consistent naval activity of all the parts involved in these actions and the existence of a multiplicity of targets led to an increase in naval warfare. The second half of the 9th century is probably the period in which the Byzantine navy fought the highest number of clashes in the open sea. Naval battles of such a kind are witnessed in 868, 873, 879, 880, 898, 902, 910, 912, and 956.[50] In 880 the *patrikios* and *droungarios tou ploimou* Nasar attacked the Muslim fleet off Western Greece even at night, a very rare event in medieval naval warfare.[51] In 904 a Byzantine renegade, Leo of Tripoli (known to the Muslims as Gūlama Zurāfa) led a devastating incursion into the Dardanelles by sacking Abydos. Then, he turned back to Thessaloniki, and captured the second city of the empire by taking thousands of prisoners.[52] In order to revenge the humiliation suffered at Thessaloniki, Leo VI in 911 sent a large naval squadron to the Levant under the command of the *patrikios* and *logothetēs tou dromou* Himerios, with the purpose of attacking Syria.[53] But following some early successes, Himerios's fleet not only failed to reconquer Crete, but was annihilated by Leo of Tripoli off Chios in 912.[54] In 949, another expedition launched against Crete, under the command of Constantinos Gongylēs, failed.[55]

It can be assumed that throughout the 9th and the first half of the 10th century, Byzantium suffered at the hands of Islam in naval warfare. But in the second half of the 10th century this trend changed, at least in the East. Between July 960 and March 961 Nikephoros Phokas had the great merit of reconquering Crete.[56] In 965 Cyprus was under the total control of the Byzantines. Things did not go as well in southern Italy, however. Here, the expeditionary corps

47 See below.

48 A fifth project was made in 865 by Michael III, but it was aborted because of the assassination of the Caesar Bardas: see Arhweiler, *Byzance*, p. 112.

49 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 48.

50 Ibid., pp. 61-2, 64, 66, 68, 71-2.

51 Ibid., p. 66.

52 Vasiliev, *Byzance*, II/1, pp. 163-77; Skopeliti, "Οι ναυτικές δυνάμεις", pp. 95-9; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 62-3.

53 Vasiliev, *Byzance*, II/1, pp. 211-12; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 63.

54 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 63.

55 Best account in Vasiliev, *Byzance*, II/1, pp. 332-41.

56 On the expedition see Malamut, *Îles*, I, pp. 88-9; Tsougarakis, *Crete*, pp. 58-73

sent to Sicily in 965, after initial successes, was defeated both on the land and at sea.[57] The same fate was suffered by the army sent in 1038 under the leadership of George Maniakes.[58] The Byzantine recovery in the East was, on the one hand, a consequence of the massive investments in the navy which had been made since Leo VI's time. But on the other, it was also the result of a progressive weakness in the Muslims in the maritime space of the Mediterranean Levant. The second half of the 10th century was characterised by the conquest of Egypt by the Fāṭimids. During the 990s there were naval engagements between their navy and the empire,[59] but all things being considered, the new dynasty was unable to reverse the victory of the Byzantines in the eastern frontier, which reached its zenith in the age of Basil II. The last Muslim naval raid known to the sources against the Aegean region is dated to 1035.[60]

In the 11th century a very contradictory image of the fleet emerges. As has already been stated, in 1038 a consistent naval squadron accompanied the army in the aborted expedition against Sicily. But when in 1043 the Rhōs attacked Constantinople for the fourth time, the imperial capital seems to have been deprived of maritime forces, because the invaders were defeated only because a storm destroyed their fleet, which was composed of light vessels.[61] Writing in the 1070s, Kekaumenos describes a situation in which the officers of the navy neglected their duties.[62] In the context of the military collapse suffered by the empire in Italy and Asia Minor in the years in which Kekaumenos was writing, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this carelessness towards the navy had begun during the last phases of the Macedonian dynasty.[63] Throughout his reign Alexius I (1081-1118) tried to strengthen the fleet.[64] Due to the loss of a large part of Asia Minor, the maintenance of the naval themes had become ineffective and impossible. In the framework of a more general reorganisation of the central and peripheral administration, all naval forces of the empire were put under the command of a Constantinopolitan high officer called *megas doux*.[65] At the same time, during the 12th century, the Peloponnese and the Attic region increased their importance both as

57 Eickhoff, *Seekrieg*, p. 358; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 74.

58 Eickhoff, *Seekrieg*, p. 387-92; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 77.

59 Lev, "Fātimids Navy".

60 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 88.

61 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 128-9; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 86. The preceding attacks against Constantinople by the Rōs had taken place in 860, 907, 941: ibid., pp. 60, 66, 72.

62 Kekaumenos, *Strategikon,* ed. Litavrin, 292, ll. 22-24; 294, ll. 1-5.

63 Ahweiler, *Byzance*, p. 180; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 87.

64 Ahrwiler, *Byzance*, pp. 175-222.

65 Ibid., pp. 205-211. See also below.

maritime recruiting areas and as naval territories of the empire in comparison to the coasts of Asia Minor. The insular space continued to keep its pivotal importance for the navy, but in a completely different political framework than that of the middle Byzantine situation. Starting from the end of the 11th century the customary dual hegemony shared by Byzantium and Islam over the Eastern Mediterranean came to an end. New protagonists emerged both in the East and in the West. In the former, the Turkish emirates born after 1071 began developing forms of piratical activity. In 1088-89 the emir Çaka built a fleet in Smyrna and from there he sacked Adramyttion, Abydos, Chios, Mytilene, Samos and Rhodes.[66] His pirate activity was continued by the emirates of Aydin and Mentesche. But for Byzantium a major danger was represented by the Normans. In 1080-1081 they conquered Dyrrachion and the Ionian islands, even though later the Byzantines were able to re-take their control of the lost territories. However, in the course of the 12th century, the Normans launched two devastating naval expeditions in the hearth of the Byzantine Empire. In 1147 they sacked Thebes and Corinth;[67] in 1185, they ravaged the second city of the empire, Thessaloniki, and attempted to attack Constantinople.[68] The fight against the Normans obliged Alexius I to ask the help of the Venetian fleet in exchange for a second important commercial privilege issued in 1082, following the one that had been granted to them by Basil II in 992.[69] Consequently, the Venetian presence in Constantinople and in the Aegean increased during the 12th century and began to be problematic for the empire. The age of the Crusades coincided with the appearance in the Levant of other western fleets, such as those of Venice, Pisa, and Genoa.[70] In short, the 12th century witnessed a plurality of naval forces acting in the space of the eastern Mediterranean, but none of them was able to acquire a clear hegemony over the others. Alexius I promoted naval re-armament, beginning with the 1090s, in order to be able to cope with the Turks, Normans and Pisans. According to H. Ahrweiler, he would have built at least three important large fleets (in 1092-1094, 1099, 1105).[71] However, his policy does not seems to have aimed at giving the navy a new permanent organisation, but rather at reinforcing it only on the occasion of specific military campaigns. As a matter of fact, when John II (1118-1143) – accused

66 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 184-5; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 100-1.

67 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 242; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 111.

68 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 284-8; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 118.

69 The texts of the two privileges can be read in Pozza/Ravegnani, *Trattati*, n. 1, pp. 21-5; n. 2, pp. 35-45.

70 Lilie, *Handel*; Id., *Byzantium*.

71 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 186, 193, 195.

by Nicetas Choniates of weakening the fleet[72] – tried in 1122 to abandon the traditional allegiance with the Venetians, he was obliged to renounce his plans because he did not have sufficient naval forces to oppose the Venetians when, in 1123, they plundered Corfu and, in 1125, Samos, Chios, Lesbos and Andros.[73] Consequently, in 1126 the emperor renewed their former privileges. A policy of vigorous re-armament was undertaken by emperor Manuel I Komnēnos (1143-1180). In fact, a powerful fleet was necessary in order to pursue his ambitious programme of Mediterranean leadership. In 1143 he sent a strong expeditionary corps under the command of Demetrios Branas against the principality of Antioch, with the purpose of compelling prince Raymond to acknowledge Byzantine suzerainty.[74] Although the Byzantine navy was unable to prevent the devastating Norman raid against the coasts of Greece in 1147, two years later a squadron led firstly by Stephanos Kontostephanos, and then, after his death, by John Axouch, retook the island of Corfu from the Normans.[75] The ephemeral Italian expedition of 1155-56 was accompanied by a small naval component of 10 (to start with) and (later) 14 warships.[76] On the contrary, the Byzantine fleet that attacked Egypt in 1169 along with the forces of King Amalric of Jerusalem was remarkable, consisting of 200 *ploia makra*.[77] This fleet, under the orders of Andronikos Kontostephanos, landed in Acre, but failed in the attack against Damietta due to scarce coordination with Amalric's army. In 1170 Manuel I ordered the confiscation of the properties of every Venetian living in the regions of the Byzantine Empire. In doing so, he intended to weaken the Venetian positions in *Romania* to the advantage of the Genoese interests. In response, the Venetians sent a fleet that lay siege to Euripos.[78] Probably on this occasion the Byzantine navy was able to repel the attempt made by the Venetians to enter the Dardanelles. In 1173, Byzantine naval forces were essential in enabling Ancona to resist for seven months the siege by Frederick I and his Venetian allies.[79] Another big fleet was probably sent to Egypt by Manuel in 1176.[80]

If, therefore, during Manuel's reign the navy experienced a revival, in the period of the Angeloi dynasty (1185-1204) it saw a new decline. The best

72 See Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 230 and below.
73 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 231- 2; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 111.
74 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 235; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 112.
75 Ahrwiler, *Byzance*, p. 245-50; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 113.
76 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 253.
77 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 265; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 115.
78 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 257; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 115-6.
79 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 260-1.
80 Ibid., p. 266.

proof of this can be seen by the virtual absence of the fleet in the defence of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade.[81] The Latin conquest of Constantinople put the history of the Byzantine navy in a completely new perspective, both in terms of its strategic functions and its military capabilities. The emperors of Nicaea limited themselves to building a few small naval detachments, that served them to carry their troops across the Marmara sea.[82] Michael VIII (1258-1282) was the sole 13th century emperor to be able to reconstruct a naval force for open-sea operations with an anti-Angevin function.[83] As is well known, he sought Genoese help for giving the newly-restored empire centred on Constantinople a chance to survive.[84] This attempt did not prove to be decisive; in fact, in the second half of the 13th century naval hegemony over the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea was firmly in the hands of the fleets of the two conflicting Italian cities, Venice and Genoa. This hegemony was supported by a new type of warships, the *galea*, which had a different and more efficacious oared system than that of the *dromōn*.[85] Emperor Andronicus II (1282-1328) was accused by George Pachimeres and Nikephoros Gregoras of abandoning the care of the fleet.[86] This accusation is probably harsh. During Andronikos' time, pursuing a policy of military power by means of the fleet was simply impossible for the empire. It no longer had the economic means to do so. In the course of the 14th century Byzantium had become a small Balkan state, after losing any possibility of defending the maritime space around it.

3 The Organisation of the Navy

The institutional organisation of the navy can be roughly divided into three large periods. The first stretches from the foundation of Constantinople until the first half of the 7th century; the second from the second half of the 7th to the first half of the 11th century; the third from the second half of the 11th century up to the end of the empire. Preliminary comments which need to be considered are that for the most part of its history the Byzantine navy had its own military commands, and the emperors always reserved themselves the right of appointing as the head of big fleets dignitaries who were devoid of any

81 Ibid., p. 297.
82 Ibid., p. 301-20.
83 Ibid., pp. 336-9.
84 Ibid., pp. 229-30.
85 See below.
86 Arhweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 376-7.

technical competence.[87] In fact, naval formations can be found occasionally under the orders of civil officers, eunuchs, and even – on one occasion – a deacon.[88] In the early period this phenomenon may have been favoured by the same institutional structure of the fleet. But more generally it reflects the incoherence of the Byzantine administration, in which the fiduciary relationship between the emperor and his dignitaries always prevailed over criteria of rationality and functionalism.

From the 4th century to the first half of the 7th century the navy lacked high military offices which were peculiar to it. Usually, naval formations were put under the command of *magistri militum*, when they were not led by civil officers.[89] The entire institutional organisation of the navy was probably modelled on that of the army.[90] Some epigraphic texts prove that soldiers destined for service in the fleet were enrolled in *numeri* or *banda*, as were those serving in the army. But their units seem to have been designed not by the names of emperors, towns or other kind of designations, but by ordinal numbers. The puzzling indications of a funerary Latin inscription from Carales, dating to the 6th century, has been interpreted as pertaining to a certain Secundus *dr*(*omonarius*) *n*(*umeri*) *s*(*ecundi*).[91] This hypothesis, which has been challenged by some scholars,[92] seems to be reinforced by another piece of evidence found in Herakleia (modern Marmara Ereğlisi, Turkey), which refers to Zōsimē, the wife of Sabbatios *στρατιότο νόμερο τρετίον* (sic),[93] namely a soldier of the 3rd regiment. Moreover, for the later period (the 9th century) we have the seal of Andreas *κόμης τοῦ βασιλικοῦ πλωΐμου βάνδου τρίτου*.[94]

The political and military contingencies connected to the Arab pressure against Byzantine territory had important repercussions for the organisation of the fleet. In order to better coordinate the military response against the Muslim maritime expeditions, the first top unified command of the navy was created. It is uncertain whether such innovation was due to the initiative of

87 Guilland, "Le drongaire", p. 537.

88 Iohannes, deacon and *genikos logothetēs:* Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 385, ll. 9-17; *PmbZ* I, 2961.

89 Some examples in Cosentino, "Come i Bizantini", pp. 215-6.

90 Maurice, *Strategikon*, 12 B.21.5-12. On this passage, see the commentary by Cosentino, "Come i Bizantini", p. 243.

91 Cosentino, "Epitafio sardo", p. 194.

92 Zuckerman, "Learning", p. 110, n. 95; and, more generally on his view on the nonexistence of an early Byzantine fleet before Constans II see Zuckerman, "Byzantine dromon", pp. 57-63. Corda, *Iscrizioni cristiane*, pp. 70-1 seems to accept my suggestion.

93 Sayar, *Perinthos – Herakleia*, n. 236.

94 *PmbZ* I, 417.

Constans II (641-668) or that of his son, Constantine IV (669-685).[95] What is certain is that between 678 and 685 the *Miracula Sancti Demetrii* witnesses the person of a certain Sisinnios, who is styled *στρατηγὸς τῶν καράβων καὶ τῶν καραβησιάνων στρατιωτῶν* (commander of the warships and of the soldiers serving on them).[96] The decision of putting all naval forces active in the eastern part of the empire under the leadership of a sole commander was probably taken after the first (654) or the second (668-674) attack against Constantinople.

In the ratification of the acts of the 6th ecumenical council by Justinian II, two fleets were mentioned: the *Cabarisiani*, that is the *Caravisiani*, in the East; and the *Septensiani* in the West.[97] The latter probably consisted of a small squadron of *dromons* stationed in *Septem* (modern Ceuta), with the task of patrolling the maritime spaces across Africa, Spain and Sardinia. It is possible that the *Karabēsianoi* were constituted for the protection of Constantinople; as a matter of fact, their jurisdiction extended over the Aegean Sea, the Dodecanese and the Pamphylian coasts, namely along the maritime corridor used by Muslim fleets for approaching the capital of the empire. The location of the institutional seat of the *stratēgos tōn Karabēsianōn* is unknown; perhaps it was in Samos or Phygela. It seems that his large jurisdiction was subdivided into smaller areas presided over by maritime *droungarioi*. But between 698 and 732 the commander of the Kibyrrhaiōtai was elevated to the rank of *stratēgos*. The reasons leading to this change are obscure. According to H. Ahrweiler, the constitution of the Kibyrrhaiōtai as an autonomous *stratēgia* would have been motivated by the desire of Leo III to diminish the power of the chief of the Karabisian fleet, who had opposed his ascension to the throne.[98]

However, it is also possible to argue that the motivation had a military purpose, that of potentiating a region, such as Pamphylia, which was the closest one to the Syro-Palestinian and Egyptian littoral, and from which the Muslim expeditions against the empire were launched. The strategy would have been

95 See above, n. 28.

96 Text: Lemerle, *Anciens recueils*, I (five anonymous miracles), p. 230, l. 30; p. 231, l. 1; on the dating Lemerle, *Anciens recueils,* II, pp. 161-2. On the Karabēsianoi: Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 19-24; Antoniadis-Bibicou, *Études*, pp. 79-80; Eickhoff, *Seekrieg*, pp. 82-83; Kolias, "Kriegsmarine", pp. 133-4; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 25, 32.

97 ACO² II/2, pp. 886-7.

98 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 30-1. This interpretation was first advanced by Bury, "Naval Policy", p. 26. According to Antoniadis-Bibicu, *Études*, p. 87, Leo III would have liked the regional fleets to have a greater role. Grigoriou–Ioannidou, "Θέμα τῶν Κιβυρραιωτῶν", p. 221, thinks that the *thema* was established in the last years of Leo III or at the beginning of the reign of Constantine V. Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 32, are inclined to follow Ahrweiler's interpretation.

that of preventing the Muslims from penetrating into the Aegean and menacing Constantinople for as long as possible. In any case, the idea that during the course of the 8th century, the Kibyrrhaiōtai would have substituted the Caravisians as the sole maritime *stratēgia* of the empire, needs to be revised. There are in existence a certain number of seals which prove that throughout the 8th and up to the beginning of the 9th century the two naval commands coexisted.[99] It is hard to delineate precisely the exact administrative borders that divided them. It is reasonable to think that the territory of the *Karabēsianoi* included the whole coast stretching from Abydos to Miletus, as well as Lesbos, Samos, Chios and the Cyclades, while the jurisdiction of the Kibyrrhaiōtai would have extended along the littoral from Miletus to the end of the gulf of Attaleia, and also be comprised of the Dodecanese islands.[100] Since the office of *stratēgos tōn Karabēsianōn* is missing in the Taktikon Uspensky (842/843), one may conclude that it was abolished before this date, possibly after the conquest of Crete by the Arabs.[101]

Between the end of the 7th century and the first half of the 9th century a plurality of *droungarioi*, namely minor officers who were put at the head of local naval detachments, are attested. We can quote one *droungarios* in Malta, one in Seleucia, three in the *Aigaion Pelagos*, one in the Hellas, one in Kos, one in the Kolpos, one in Christopolis and, possibly, one in Sardinia.[102] It is likely that some of these officers served at the orders of the *stratēgos* of the Caravisians (the *droungarioi* of the Aegaion Pelagos and the Kolpos) and that of Cibyrraiots (the *droungarioi* of Kos and Seleucia). But others, such as those mentioned in Malta, Hellas and Sardinia, must have been appointed at the head of autonomous forces, namely not dependent on the two big *stratēgiai*. In the last quarter of the 8th century an important new articulation of the naval commands of the empire was displayed. An autonomous fleet was created in Constantinople, under the orders of the *droungarios tou plōimou*.[103] Its institution perhaps paralleled the constitution of new elite regiments of the army promoted by Constantine V during the 760s.

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99 Seals of *stratēgoi*: Theophilos (711): *PmbZ* I, 8176; Adrianos (first half of 8th century): *PmbZ* I, 93; Anonymi (first half of 8th century): *PmbZ* I, 10878, 10883; Apelates: *PmbZ* I, 575 (first half of 9th century). *Ek prosōpou*: Anonymus (7th/8th century): *PmbZ* I, 10809; Theodotos (8th century): *PmbZ* I, 7933. See also Savvides, "The Secular Prosopography", nn. 4-6.

100 On Kibyrrhaiōtai: *TIB* 8, pp. 116-25, 407-13.

101 The date 842/843 has been proposed by Oikonomides, *Listes*, pp. 45-47. The attempt by Živković, "Uspenskij's Taktikon", p. 84, to re-date the text to 812-813 seems unconvincing to me.

102 All the attestations are quoted by Cosentino, "Flotte byzantine", p. 7, n. 20 and 27.

103 Quotations from the sources ibid., p. 8, n. 30.

At the end of the 8th century, therefore, the Byzantine navy was composed of a central fleet based in Constantinople, and of two regional fleets, those of the Caravisians and the Cibyrrhaiots, the *stratēgoi* of which resided presumably in Samos and in Attaleia. Under the latter two officers, several local detachments served, that were distributed across islands and towns of the Anatolian coasts. It should be noted that in the administrative geography of the naval commands of the 8th (and 9th) century, the regional fleets presided only over the maritime space running along the coasts of Asia Minor. This might be due to the fact that, as mentioned above, the naval strategy of the Muslims until the beginning of the 8th century was focused on the conquest of Constantinople. It was logical, therefore, for the Byzantine government to protect especially the maritime route leading from the Near East to the capital of the empire. Instead, naval forces active in the western shores of the Aigaion Pelagos (such as those in Thessaloniki or Hellas) or in southern Italy were not included in the organigram of the Carabisians and Cibyrrhaiots.

The conquest of Crete and Sicily determined an incisive re-organisation of the navy. Between the end of the 8th century and before 842, the *stratēgia tōn Karabēsianōn* was abolished.[104] Why this happened is unknown. Perhaps it was a consequence of the support provided by some regional naval forces to Thomas the Slave during his failed siege of Constantinople, support which may have involved the *Karabēsianoi* in particular. But whatever the reason, between 842 and 899 the area formerly comprised under their jurisdiction was divided into two naval *stratēgiai* or *themata*.[105] At their head the *droungarios* of the Aigaion Pelagos and the *droungarios* of Samos were promoted to the rank of *stratēgoi*. Perhaps the base of the Agaion Pelagos was Mytilene (Lesbos), whereas that of Samos was in the homonymous island. The *thema* of the Kibyrrhaiōtai continued to operate, as well as the force of the *droungarios tou plōimou* in Constantinople. In short, the *Klētorologion* of Philotheos (899) presents the following articulation of the naval commanders, listed according to the order of their entrance in the imperial ceremonies: 1) *stratēgos tōn*

104 The seal of Apelates (see above, n. 99) has been dated to the early 9th century, while in the Taktikon Uspensky the *stratēgos* of the Caravisians is not mentioned.

105 The term "stratēgia" or "stratēgis" should be understood, in the 7th and the 8th century, as a command of a regional army; that of "thema" (used in the sources only from the beginning of the 9th century) as an administrative circumscription in which the *stratēgos* was responsible for the recruitment of a local army mainly on the basis of the military lands system. See the discussion in Zuckerman, "Learning", pp. 125-135; Cosentino, "Rileggendo", pp. 60-65; Brubaker/Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 744-55.

Kibyrrhaiōtōn[106]; 2) *stratēgos tēs Samou*[107]; 3) *stratēgos tou Aigaiou Pelagous*[108]; 4) *droungarios tōn ploimōn* (or *tou ploimou*).[109] All four officers held the rank of *anthypatos patrikios*. This structure remains the same in the Taktikon Beneševič (dated 934/944),[110] but there are differences in the Taktikon Scurialense (dated 971/975), undoubtedly due to the imperial expansion in the East following the events of the 960s-970s. In the third quarter of the 10th century the number of naval commands (or commands which may entail a meaningful presence of naval forces) increased, while it is probable that their territorial jurisdiction was reduced, at least for some of them. Along with the old naval themes, the Taktikon Scurialense witnesses the constitution of new military offices, which the compiler lists in the order of the hierarchical precedence of their holders in court ceremonies: 1) *stratēgos tōn Kibyrrhaiōtōn*[111]; 2) *stratēgos tou Kyprou*[112]; 3) *stratēgos tou Krētēs*[113]; 4) *stratēgos tou Samou*[114]; 5) *stratēgos tou Aigaiou Pelagous*[115]; 6) *stratēgos tōn Kykladōn nēsōn*[116]; 7) *droungarios tōn ploimatōn*.[117] Neither Cyprus nor Crete can be strictly considered as naval themes, for it can be presumed that their commanders also had detachments of the army under them. The same consideration is valid for the *stratēgos tēs Kephalōnias* or *Kephallēnias*, who is quoted in all the preserved *taktika* of the 9th and 10th century.[118] Although a small island, Kephallēnia is not considered by Constantine Porphyrogennētos as a naval theme, for reasons which are difficult to understand.[119] In principle, it is unlikely that the new *stratēgos tōn Kykladōn nēsōn* could have been anything other than a naval commander, but we do not have

106 Oikonomides, *Listes*, pp. 101, l. 21; 105, l. 14; 139, l. 9. Historical overview on naval themes: *TIB* 10, pp. 77-81.

107 Oikonomides, *Listes*, pp. 101, l. 29; 105, l. 21; 139, l. 17.

108 Ibid., pp. 101, l. 30; 105, l. 22; 139, l. 18.

109 Ibid., pp. 103, l. 3; 107, l. 25; 139, l. 18.

110 Ibid., pp. 247, l. 20 (*stratēgos tōn Kibyrrhaiōtōn*); p. 247, l. 27 (*stratēgos tēs Samou*); p. 247, 28 (*stratēgos tou Aigaiou Pelagous*); p. 249, 16 (*droungarios tōn ploimōn*).

111 Ibid., p. 265, l. 25.

112 Ibid., p. 265, l. 26.

113 Ibid., p. 265, l. 27.

114 Ibid., p. 267, l. 2.

115 Ibid., p. 267, l. 3

116 Ibid., p. 267, l. 31.

117 Ibid., p. 269, l. 32.

118 Ibid., pp. 49, l. 15 (Uspenskij); pp. 101, l. 26; 105, l. 18; 139, l. 14 (Philotheos); p. 247, l. 24 (Beneševič); p. 265, l. 34 (Escurial).

119 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De thematibus*, pp. 91-92. The island housed naval forces, as is confirmed for example by the seal of Nikolaos *spatharios and tourmarchēs tou ploimou Kephalōnias*: *PmbZ* I, 5597.

any confirmation of this. Perhaps this new theme grouped together all the actual islands of the Cyclades. If so, its formation entailed a diminution of the maritime space under the jurisdiction of Samos.

For a long time, scholars have acknowledged that in the organisation of the middle Byzantine navy not all warships were included in the maritime *stratēgiai*. Sources witness the presence of naval detachments at the disposal of officers of the army, or which were equipped by them on particular occasions. 8th century papal letters quote the *Sicilianus stolus* more than once.[120] We have been told by the *De ceremoniis* that in the naval expedition against Syria and Crete of 911-912, 10 *dromōnes* came from the theme of Hellas, as well as in the expedition sent against Crete in 949, in which 4 *chelandia* were sent by the theme of the Peloponnese.[121] The staff depending on a naval *stratēgos* was the same of that of the officers of land themes. Our evidence documents the existence of *ek prōsopōn*, namely lieutenants;[122] *prōtonotarioi*, who were responsible for the civil functions committed to the *stratēgos*;[123] *chartoularioi*,[124] officers in charge of enrolling and up-to-dating the registers of soldiers; and *komētes tēs kortēs*, staff officers.[125] The office of the *droungarios tēs ploimou* had a similar structure. Philotheos' *Klētorologion* puts seven positions under his authority: *topotērētēs* (= *ek prōsopou*), *chartoularios*, *prōtomandatōr*, *komētes*, *kentarchoi*, *komēs tēs hetaireias*, and *mandatōres*.[126]

The *droungarioi* or *tourmarchai* were responsible for an intermediate formation of fighters (*droungos* or *tourma*) that was less numerous than an army (*stratos*) but more numerous than a regiment (*bandon*). *Droungoi* (or *tourmai*) and *banda* were composed of a variable number of troops;[127] but irrespective

120 Eickhoff, *Seekrieg*, pp. 98-9; Prigent, "Military Forces", p. 162 thinks that a squadron of the Karabisianoi had a base on Sicily.

121 Expedition of 911-913: Haldon, "Theory", p. 205, l. 38; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 550, 6; expedition of 949: Haldon, "Theory", p. 221, l. 32; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 556, 15.

122 *PmbZ* I, 10809 (Anonymous, Caravisians, 7th-8th century seal), 7933 (Theodotos, Caravisians, 8th century seal), 4592 (Leontios, Cibyrrhaiots, 9th century seal); *PmbZ* II, 23570 (Ioubas, Cibyrrhaiots, second half of 9th century – beginning of 10th century); *PmbZ* II, 22606 (Hilarion, Samos, 850/950).

123 *PmbZ* I, 2503 (Gregorios), 5507 (Niketas) documented in 9th century seals.

124 Aigaion Pelagos: *PmbZ* I, 3894 (Konstantinos, mid-8th – mid-9th century), 5070 (Michael, 9th century); 2640 (Iakobos, 9th century).

125 *PmbZ* I, 4463 (Leon, 9th century).

126 Oikonomides, *Listes*, p. 117, ll. 3-9. The *prōtomandatōr* was the chief of the order-bearers; the *komēs tēs hetaireias* was probably the commander of the *droungarios*'s personal guard. On the *komētes* and *kentarchoi*, see below.

127 Haldon, "Theory", pp. 316-8.

of the standard size of the units, which was very unstable, the ceremonial lists and the *Taktika* by Leo the Wise witness the same military nomenclature both for the army and navy. Nonetheless, the inventories of the Cretan expeditions of 911 and 949 make it clear that the organigram of the navy was primarily calculated as not having recourse to *droungoi*/*tourmai* and *banda*, but to standard complements of warships called *ousiai*.[128] In 10th century Byzantium an *ousia* was composed of 108 or 110 men[129] and was to depend on a *kentarchos*,[130] who was at the same time the commander of an *ousiakon chelandion*, that is, a warship served by one *ousia*. There also existed larger *dromōnes* with crews of two *ousiai* (that is, with 216 men or even more, namely having 220 or 230 men each)[131] and *ousiaka pamphyla* with crews of 120, 130, 150 or even 160 men.[132] The latter expression – which is used both in the masculine and neuter form, *pamphylos* or *pamphylon* – is ambiguous. According to some scholars, it would have defined another kind of ship, either a galley or a vessel with a round-shape form (*stroggylon*).[133] It should be noted, however, that in the *De ceremoniis* the *megas pamphylos* is described as a unit serving on the two *basilika dromōnia*, which consisted of at least two contingents.[134] The difference

128 Haldon, "Theory", p. 335; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 256-7 (with further literature). But other scholars, such as Makrypoulias, "Navy", pp. 154-5 and Yannopoulos, "Quelques à côté", p. 157, think that the term ousia is used to denote a ship.

129 This is, at least, the testimony provided by the inventory of the Cretan expedition of 949: Haldon, "Theory", p. 281, ll. 19, 22 (108 men), l. 25 (110 men); Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 555, 5, 7, 9.

130 Leo, *Naumachika*, ed. Jeffreys, 8 = Leo VI Tactica 19.8. 51. See Dimitroukas, *Ναυμαχικά*, p. 256, n. 29; Haldon, *Commentary*, p. 398.

131 *Dromōnes* with 216 men (Cretan expedition of 949): Haldon, "Theory", p. 219, l. 14; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, 555, 2. *Dromōnes* with 220 men each (Cretan expedition of 949): Haldon, "Theory", p. 219, l. 28; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 556, 11; *Dromōnes* with 230 men each, with an extra complement of 70 soldiers (Cretan expedition of 911): Haldon, "Theory", p. 203, l. 18; 205, l. 22, 28, 33, 38; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 548, 2; 549, 3, 4, 7; 550, 6.

132 Cretan expedition of 911 (*pamphyla* with 130 and 160 men each): Haldon, "Theory", p. 203, l. 19; 205, ll. 24, 29, 34; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 548, 2; 549, 3, 4, 5. Cretan expedition of 949 (*pamphyla* with 120 and 150 men each): Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age,* p. 555, 5, 7, 9.

133 Ahweiler, *Byzance*, p. 415, who thinks that the *pamphylos* is a transport ship. Yannopoulos, "Quelques 'à côté'", p. 157 contests this affirmation by proposing that it is "un bateau long à caractère militaire". Zuckerman, "Byzantine dromon", pp. 83-86, argues that the *pamphyloi* often served for the transportation of horses; he thinks also that *pamphyloi* were admiral ships on which the holds were removed by the rowers and transformed into living quarters (p. 89).

134 The *megas pamphylos* is quoted in Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 579, with reference to the imperial reception given by Constantine, and his son

between *pamphyloi* and *ousiai* might have been that the former were more numerous and composed of specially chosen men in comparison to the latter.

The standard complement of a warship, therefore, might vary according to the contingencies. We may suppose that in the case of a ship fitted out with two *ousiai*, its commander had the rank of *komēs*. But a Sicilian inscription also documents a *pemptokentarchos*, that is presumably a commander of 500 men.[135] Soldiers serving on a warship – that is those enrolled in a *ousia* – had the double task of being oarsmen and fighters at the same time. But they were called, technically, *stratiōtai*, as were those of the army. This is proved, for instance, by an invocative inscription from Syros (Cyclades), which records a certain Synetos *stratiōtēs*, who asks the protection of God for himself and those who were sailing with him (Κύριε σῶσω τὸν δοῦλόν σου Σύνετον στρατιώτη[ν] μετὰ τῶν συμπλεώντο[ν]).[136] On certain occasions, vessels might also carry soldiers as supernumeraries.[137]

At least in the 10th century our evidence demonstrates that the role of the *basilikos ploimos* was much more superior than that of the naval themes as a fighting force on campaigns. In the inventory of the *De ceremoniis* concerning the expedition launched in 911-912 against Syria and Crete, the *droungarios* of the imperial fleet led a formation of 100 warships and 23,800 men, compared with 31 warships and 6,760 men of the Kibyrrhaiōtai, 22 warships and 4,680 men of Samos, 12 warships and 3,100 men of the Aigaion Pelagos, and 10 warships with 3,000 men of the theme of Hellas.[138] In the inventory of the Cretan expedition of 949 the proportion was the same: the imperial fleet was composed of 60 warships and 8,870 men; the Kibyrrhaiōtai participated with a force of 21 warships, of different size, and about 1,560 men; Samos, with 12 warships and 1,548 men; and moreover, the *tourmarchēs* of the Peloponnēsos led a

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Romanos, for the arrival in Constantinople of the ambassadors sent by the emir of Tarsos; the men of the *ousia* of the *droungarios* of the fleet and those of the *megas pamphylos* were paraded out of the bronze gate of the dining hall of the *Kandidatoi*, holding their spurs and swords. Ahweiler, *Byzance*, p. 416, intends the *megas pamphylos* not as a unit, but as an office. Concerning the two *basilika dromōnia*, see Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, 51, ed. Moravcsik, pp. 246, 248, who clarifies that the first emperor to make use of the two *dromons* for his maritime transfers was Leo VI. Their mariners had uniforms of dark and red colours.

135 See *SEG* 45, 1427. Invocative inscription from Syros (Cyclades) concerning the *kentarchos* Dometios: Kiourtzian, *Recueil*, n. 133. Same text regarding a *dromōn*: ibid., n. 79.

136 Ibid., n. 130.

137 In the naval expedition against Syria and Crete of 911 the *dromōnes* carried an extra supplement of 70 *polemistai*: Haldon, "Theory", pp. 203, 205; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age,* pp. 548-9.

138 Haldon, "Theory", pp. 202-205; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age,* pp. 548-9.

squadron of 4 *chelandia*,[139] whereas the forces of the Aigaion Pelagos (10 warships and 1,152 men) were left behind for the protection of Constantinople. It worth noting that in both campaigns, the Mardaites and Rhōs (or Varangians)[140] took part as a separate fighting force. The former were an ethnic group of debated origin that settled in Pamphylia at the end of the 7th century, coming from the Lebanon.[141] Since the reign of Leo VI the Mardaites had served in the fleet of the Kibyrrhaiōtai under a commander of their own, the *katepanō*, who had his seat in Attaleia.[142] A text on nautical meteorology, written towards the end of the 9th century, describes the Mardaites as excellent sailors.[143] As far as the Rhōs are concerned, they were enrolled especially in the *basilikon ploimon*.[144] Perhaps the *komēs tēs hetaireias*, who was mentioned in the Philotheos' *Taktikon* as being an officer dependent on the *droungarios* of the imperial fleet, was the leader of a unit formed of foreign soldiers.[145] In such a case, it is possibe that the Rhōs served also in this maritime regiment. Among the crews of the Cretan expedition of 949, a component of Toulmatzoi (Dalmatians) is mentioned.[146] Of them, however, we do not have any mentions other than that preserved in chapter 45 of the *De ceremoniis*.

The structure of the navy as described in the middle Byzantine *taktika*, with its fundamental bipartition into an imperial fleet and different regional forces, lasted until the middle of the 11th century. From then onwards it underwent a process of simplification that had among its most apparent effects a strong centralisation of its organisation. One of the last references to a *stratēgos* of the Kibyrrhaiōtai is found on the seal of a certain David, dated to the 11th century.[147]

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139 Haldon, "Theory", pp. 218-221; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age,* pp. 554-6.

140 Blöndal, *Varangians*, pp. 21-3, 29-31.

141 Canard, "Djarādjima", in *EI* 2, pp. 456-58; Antoniadis-Bibicou, *Études*, pp. 31-32; Ditten, *Verschiebungen*, pp. 138-58.

142 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio,* ed. Moravcsik, 50, 170. Evidence about them: *PmbZ* II, 20021, 24605, 27181, 27902, 28145.

143 See above, n. 11.

144 This seems to be the case, at least, of the expedition of 911-912, in which the contingent of 700 Rhōs is ascribed as a separated force to the mariners of the imperial fleet: Haldon, "Theory", p. 203, l. 6; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 548, 1

145 Oikonomides, *Listes*, p. 340.

146 Haldon, "Theory", p. 219, l. 16; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 555, 4. The hypothesis that the Toulmatzoi were Dalmatians has been made by Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 34, 397.

147 Cheynet/Gökyıldırım/Bulgurlu, *Sceux byzantins*, *s. v.* Other *stratēgoi* of the Kibyrrhaiōtai quoted in the sources between the second half of the 10th and the second half of the 11th century: *PmbZ* II, 24604 (Leon), 26865 (Romanos). *Stratēgoi* of Samos witnessed in the same period: *PmbZ* II, 21090 (Basilios Mesardonites), 21251 (Christodoulos), 21409 (David), 22213 (Georgios).

The Turkish conquest of Asia Minor in the last third of the 11th century led to the occupation of the whole territory of the Kibyrrhaiōtai, and left the themes of Samos and the Aigaion Pelagos in a state of great weakness. The reform of the administrative apparatus undertaken by Constantine IX Monomachos, and improved by Alexius I, progressively obliterated the large territorial districts of the theme-system to the advantage of smaller circumscriptions centred on cities.[148] This entailed an incisive reorganisation of the military apparatus of the empire. The two highest offices of the army, the *domestikos* of the East and the *domestikos* of the West, were unified in the post of the *megas domestikos*, upon whom all the terrestrial forces came to depend. Simultaneously, Alexius I put all naval forces under the authority of the *megas doux*.[149] The *droungarios tou ploimou* lost power by becoming, in the course of the 12th century, the chief of the *basilikon dromōnion*, a small group of ships serving the emperor directly.[150] The *megas doux* remained the top officer of the navy until 1453 – in the Pseudo-Codinos he still occupied a high rank in court ceremonies[151] – though the post of *droungarios* continued to be preserved in the imperial administration up to the 14th century, but without a real function.[152]

Little is known of the internal organisation of the navy of the Comnenian and Palaeologian periods and there is a lack of detailed studies. It seems that the fitting out of big fleets was undertaken only on the occasion of important military expeditions.[153] Permanent naval forces were extremely reduced, still in Constantinople; in times of peace they were under the command of local dukes, while during military campaigns they returned to being at the disposal of the *megas doux*.[154] The practice of recruiting crews among specific regional or ethnic groups increased. Besides Russians or Latins, 13th and 14th century evidence mentions in particular the Tsakones (the inhabitants of the Peloponnese) and the Gasmouloi or Basmouloi, namely those who were born from unions between Greeks and Latins.[155] Already under the Comnenians,

148 Arhweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 139-42, 197-211, 273-79.

149 Guilland, "Drongaire", p. 540; Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 209-210.

150 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 210.

151 Ps.- Codinos, *On offices*, p. 26, l. 11 ed. Macrides/Munitiz/Angelov (= ed. Verpeaux, p. 134, l. 11); Guilland, "Drongaire", p. 548.

152 In the Ps. Codinus, *On offices*, p. 28, l. 1 (= ed. Verpeaux, p. 138, l. 14) he is listed at the 35 post of the imperial hierarchy; see also Guilland, "Drongaire", p. 540. However, Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 210 underlines that the *droungarios*, in practice, completely lost his former power.

153 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 301-88.

154 Ibid., p. 272.

155 Ibid., pp. 405-4; Antoniadis-Bibicou, *Études*, pp. 33-5.

in the office of *megas doux* we find individuals of foreign origin, such as Landulphus in 1099.[156] This practice increased during the reign of Andronikos II (1282-1328), when the highest office of the Byzantine navy was occupied by three members of the Catalan company (Roger de Flor, Berenguer d'Entença, Fernand Ximénès de Arenos).[157]

4 Ships, Shipyards and Armament

A letter of the *Variae* by Cassiodorus dated 507/511 uses the word *dromonarius*, indicating a mariner serving on a warship.[158] In the technical vocabulary of the late antique marine the word was new and owed its meaning to a new type of galley: the *dromōn*. The latter is mentioned once by the same Cassiodorus,[159] and several times by Procopius of Caesarea, who specifies in a passage of the *Bellum Vandalicum* that such a ship was elongated, prepared to wage war, with single banks covered by decks in order to protect the men rowing in them from the arrows of the enemy.[160] Considering that the first mention of the *dromonarii* is dated to the beginning of the 6th century, it is much more likely that the galley from which they took their qualification began to be used at least from the second half of the 5th century. It is uncertain whether the etymology of *dromōn* (literally "corridor") has something to do with the *dēmosios dromos* (*cursus publicus*), one of the functions to which it may have been employed.[161] It was conceived of as a multi-utility ship, because several late antique texts underline its capability of being employed both for waging war and carrying items, as well as for patrolling coasts and rivers.[162]

Whether the *dromōn* represented a slow evolution of the Roman *liburna* (as some scholars think[163]) or was a new kind of warship, it must have had some structural characteristics that justified the reference to its speed. It has been

156 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, XI 10, 2, ed. Reinsche/Kambylis, p. 350 (see also Guilland, "Drongaire", p. 543).

157 Guilland, "Drongaire", pp. 549-50.

158 Cassiodorus, *Letters*, ed. Mommsen, 2, 31.

159 Cassiodorus, *Letters* 5.16 (dated at 525/526), in which King Theoderic orders to his praetorian prefect, Abundantius, the construction of 1,000 *dromones* (see also Cassiodorus, *Letters* 5, 17-20 and the comment by Cosentino, "Re Teoderico", pp. 350, 352-3.

160 Procopius, *Vandal War*, ed. Wirth/Haury, 1.11.16.

161 Cosentino, "Epitafio sardo", p. 195.

162 Ibid., p. 197 (with quotation of the evidence); cereals were also among the items that *dromones* could carry (*pace* Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 171).

163 Panciera, "Liburna", p. 148; Bragadin, "Le navi", p. 392; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 127.

suggested convincingly by J. Pryor that such characteristics are to be found in three elements: 1) the replacement of the classical waterline ram by an above-water spur; 2) a change in hull design and bow construction as a consequence of the disappearing of the waterline ram; 3) the replacement of the square sail by a lateen sail.[164] All of these three peculiarities do not necessarily have to have appeared at the same time, but at a certain point in time they must have characterized the *dromōn* as such. In any case, they appeared in the context of a general transformation in shipbuilding methods, which scholars have defined from planking first/shell first to frames first/skeleton first.[165] We possess much more written evidence about the shape that this warship took in the middle Byzantine period than we do for the shape in Late Antiquity. As we have only scarce archaeological data,[166] the dimensions of the *dromōn* in the early period are a matter of speculation.

Based on a reproduction of the Malaga graffito (whose dating to the late antique period is highly uncertain, however[167]), Viereck estimated an overall length of 28 m, about 4.40 m in width and 0.90 m in drought.[168] Pryor proposed a similar estimation with regard to the ships in the period of the Macedonian emperors (overall length of 31.25 and 4.40 m in width at the deck).[169] But other scholars, such as Dolley (overall length of 39.64 m, 5.48 m in width and 1.28 in draught) and Makris (with reference to the *dromons* with 230 rowers mentioned in the inventories of *De ceremoniis*: overall length 60 m,

164 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 127. Other important observations about the structural characteristics of the *dromon* had been already made by Bonino, "Archeologia", pp. 40-2; Id., "Rams", pp. 80-82.

165 For technical explanations see Mor, "Socio-economic implications", pp. 39-47; Beltrame, *Archeologia*, pp. 181-95, 205-15.

166 With the exception of six shipwrecks (of which, only three have been published: YK 2, YK 4 and YK 16) found in the Yenikapı area (Theodosian harbour) in Istanbul, which the excavators think to be galleys of *galea* type; they have been dated by the excavators to the second half of the 10th century: Kocabaş, 'Old ships', pp. 176-183 (YK 16); Pulak et Al., "Yenikapi", pp. 25-28 (YK 2, YK 4).

167 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 163, n. 1.

168 Viereck, *Flotte*, p. 73.

169 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 205. But as Haldon, *Commentary*, p. 398, rightly notes, this estimate should be revised in light of the finding of the YK2, YK 4 and YK 16 shipwrecks, *galeai* whose length has been calculated by the excavators at *c*. 30 m (see above, footnote 166). Zuckerman, "Byzantine Dromon", p. 62, imagines a much smaller boat about 21 m long and 3 m wide, with "sides no higher than about 0.9-1 m. for which about 0.4 m is likely to have been immersed". He takes this quotation from Höckmann, "Late Roman vessels", p. 129; but this latter, as he admits, relates this estimate to a *lusoria* (fluvial boat), not to a *dromon*.

10 m in width and 1.5 m in draught), have suggested higher estimations, at least for the standard galley described by Leo VI.[170] The average speed of the *dromōn* has been hypothesized at about 5 knots, but it may have reached a battle speed of at least 7 knots.[171]

Late antique evidence seems to suggest that crews in that period were small, ranging between 25 and 35 men,[172] although the information is far from being clear. As a matter of fact, according to Viereck the standard crew of a *dromōn* in the 6th century would be about 60 men,[173] while Pryor has suggested around 50 men.[174] Whatever it may have been, the confrontation at sea between Byzantium and Islam provoked an increase in the medium tonnage of warships and the appearance of different sizes of the same model of galley. At the beginning of the 9th century the *Chronicle* by Theophanes the Confessor witnesses for the first time a new type of warship called a *chelandion*.[175] 9th century sources make several references to *chelandia*, both in Greek and in Latin sources.[176] One possible derivation of the term has been suggested from the noun *chelys* (χέλυς), "eel";[177] but the derivation from *kelēs* (κέλης), "courser" has also been argued.[178] *Dromōn* and *chelandion* are often interchangeable terms in the sources, which leads us to think that the two ships must have had a similar structure and the differences between them may have consisted only of their size, the latter being heavier, the former lighter. Both Leo VI's *Taktika* and the inventories of the Cretan expeditions of 911 and 949 pointed out that there were larger *dromōnes* with about 200 rowers or more,[179] while normally

170 Dolley, "Warships", p. 48; Makris, *Ships*, p. 92. On the structure of the *dromōn* see also Bockius, "Zur Modellrekonstruktion", pp. 451-475.

171 Markis, "Ships", p. 92; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 335.

172 Cosentino, "Constans II", p. 581.

173 Viereck, *Flotte*, p. 73.

174 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 133.

175 Thephanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 377.

176 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 166-7.

177 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 412, which seems to me – linguistically – the more convincing etymology. See the analysis by Moutsos, "Greek ΧΕΛΑΝΔΙΟΝ", who assumes however that the term derives from an earlier *χελυνάδιον, a diminutive of χελύνη > χελώνη (p. 408) "tortoise", from the wrong presupposition that the term meant in its origin "transport ship" (*pace* Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 167).

178 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 167.

179 Leo, *Naumachika*, ed. Jeffreys, 8-9 = Leo VI Tactica XIX, 8-9, ed. Dennis, pp. 504-7; see Dimitroukas, *Ναυμαχικά*, pp. 256-59; Haldon, *Commentary*, pp. 397-8. On the inventories of the *De ceremoniis*, see above.

they had a standard crew of 100 oarsmen (at least according to Leo), namely the same as the *ousiaka chelandia*.[180]

Pamphyloi have been claimed by scholars as a third type of vessel, along with the *dromōnes* and *chelandia*.[181] However, whether they were really ships or particular standard units of personnel that, for synecdoche, were intended as ships, is uncertain. In fact, in Leo's *Taktika*, the term *pamphylos* denotes the crew serving on the *dromōn* of the *stratēgos*, fitted out with soldiers selected for their body size, courage, training and armament.[182] This same meaning applies to a passage of the *De ceremoniis* in which (the men of) the *megas pamphylos* – that is the crew serving the two imperial *dromons* – were paraded during imperial receptions holding their spurs and swords.[183] A third type of galley mentioned in the source, on the contrary, was certainly the *galeai*. They were lighter than *dromōnes* and *chelandia*, and were constructed especially in Attaleia and Karpathos.[184] Such ships were used in particular by the Mardaites, both for scouting and raiding purposes.[185] They seem to have been similar to those vessels named *saktourai*, used by Cretan corsairs in the 9th and 10th century, which were fifty-oared ships.[186] Along with galleys, other kind of vessels were employed for carrying a variety of items: weapons, armour, military machines, grain, barley, flour, wheat, wine, oil, animals, caulking, cordage, nails, metals, linen, and wax. All these materials constituted the *touldos* or *touldon* (baggage train), which followed the warships. Transport ships – named variously as *phortagōgoi*, *phortika*, *sagēnai, skeuophora*, *skeuē*, and *barytera*

180 See above.

181 See for example Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 415, who thinks that *pamphyloi* were transport ships; Eickhoff, *Seekrieg*, p. 135; Haldon, "Theory", p. 218; and Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 189, 191-2 (originally transport ships, but later they assumed a military role). Haldon, *Commentary*, p. 400, has argued that "a pamphylon was simply a *chelandion* which was filled with the best and most able soldiers and oarsmen"). For the key translation of a passage of the inventory of the Cretan expediton see Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 555, 1. A new proposal has been advanced by Zuckerman, "Byzantine Dromon" on which see above, note 133.

182 Leo, *Naumachika*, ed. Jeffreys, 42 = Leo VI Tactica XIX 42, ed. Dennis pp. 519-21.

183 See above.

184 The inventory of Cretan expedition of 949 mentions *galeai* in Attaleia, in Antioch *ad Cragum* (mod. Güney Köy, Turkey) and in Karpathos: Haldon, "Theory", p. 221, ll. 28-31; Pryor/Jeffrey, *Age*, p. 556, 12-14. See also Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 414. *Galeai* are quoted in Leo, *Naumachika*, ed. Jeffreys, 10 = Leo VI Tactica XIX 10, ed. Dennis, p. 506. Dimitroukas, *Ναυμαχικά*, p. 259.

185 Makrypoulias, "Navy", pp. 160-61.

186 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 190.

vessels – were rarely described in Byzantine texts, but those carrying horses had to be employed especially on the occasion of big expeditions.[187]

Dromōnes continued to be mentioned in the sources until the second half of the 12th century. One of the signs of decline of the Byzantine navy in the 13th century is shown by the lack of precision in technical nomenclature concerning warships, as well as by the semantic shifting of the vocabulary regarding them. From this time onwards, while *galea* became the predominant term for indicating a warship,[188] *dromōn* was often applied to transport vessels.[189] The indistinctiveness of naval types in late Byzantium is mirrored in the use of the word *katergon*, which might indicate ships as well as any public service for naval warfare.[190] The golden age of the *dromōn* was nearing its end. In the naval architecture of the medieval West a new type of galley was being planned. It was characterized by an innovative oarage system, later known as *alla sensile*, which allowed the replacement of the fully-seated stroke of the *dromon* by a stand-and-sit stroke placed above deck.[191] This new type of oarage system is first witnessed between 1269 and 1284 in documents from the Angevin Kingdom of Sicily.[192]

Localisation, organisation and the management of shipyards in Byzantium is a subject of which little is known and there are very few studies of it . In the current state of the field we can only make some statements regarding those shipyards of Constantinople. For the reign of Theodosius II the *Notitia dignitatum* witnesses the existence of *navalia* in the XIII regions (the suburban quarter of *Sykai*), but it is highly possible that their construction dated back to the reign of Constantine or Constantius II.[193] It seems that this infrastructure was the only one to be in use until the reign of Michael III (843-867), when a second shipyard was constructed in the area of the port of *Neōrion*, on the left bank of the Golden Horn.[194] Sources between the 9th and the 11th century make mention of two arsenals: the first is called *Exartysis*, with no other qualification, and should correspond with the *navalia* of the *Notitia dignitatum*; the second is referred to as *exartysis tou Neōriou* and is to be identified with that

187 On horse transport ships see the analysis by Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 304-33 and Zuckerman, "Byzantine Dromon", pp. 83-86.

188 This happened possibly because the former *monoreme* Byzantine *galeai* became *biremes*, as did those of the Westerners: Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 426.

189 Ibid., p. 415.

190 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 291; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age,* p. 418.

191 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 430, 433.

192 Ibid., p. 430.

193 *Notitia dignitatum* 13.13.

194 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 432.

built by Michael III, or by one of his predecessors, in the area of the port of Neōrion.[195] The latter hosted a factory in which oars were produced (*kōparia*).[196]

As a consequence of the construction of a second dockyard in the port of Neōrion, this term – *neōrion* – began to be used as an equivalent of *exartysis*. We cannot know for certain whether the two installations were in use simultaneously between the 9th and the 11th centuries but this seems to have been the case. In the course of the 12th century a third dockyard was constructed, due possibly to the initiative of emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143-11181): it was the arsenal built in the Kosmidion port (called also Pissa) which was situated at the northern edge of the Golden Horn near the Blachernai Palace.[197] Emperor Michael VIII (1259-1282) took the initiative of moving the arsenals from the Golden Horn to the Marmara coasts by constructing a new installation in the *Kontoskalion*.[198] This decision was undoubtedly taken in order to avoid the dangerous regions where the Western colonies had settled both on the left (Amalfi, Venice, Pisa) and right bank (Genoa) of the Golden Horn.[199]

In the middle Byzantine period Constantinople had an officer responsible for the imperial shipyard called *exartistēs*, whose office was created before the end of the 9th century.[200] He depended on the *chartoularios tou vestiariou* and had at his disposal a *chartoularios tēs exartyseōs*.[201] The *vestiarion* was a large storehouse, or a complex of storehouses, in which various materials concerning military and naval equipment were stored, items such as projectors of liquid fire, sails, oars, cordage, nails, pitch, hemp, and components of siege machines and artillery.[202] An essential item for naval construction was, obviously, timber. As far as the provincial administration was concerned, we are informed that, among other possible means of supplying, some military units making up the forces enrolled in each naval theme were given the work every

195 Discussion, with quotation of the sources: ibid., pp. 432-3.

196 Janin *Constantinople*, p. 225; Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 430.

197 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 434.

198 Janin, *Constantinople*, pp. 221-3; Guilland, "Les ports", pp. 227-231; Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 433; Makris, *Schiffahrt*, pp. 176-84.

199 Janin, *Constantinople*, pp. 235-42.

200 Oikonomides, *Listes*, p. 121, l. 21. A seal of Eustratios *basilikos spatharios kai exartistēs* (*PmbZ*, II, 21890 has come down to us, dated between the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 10th century), as well as that of Michael *spatharios kai exartistēs* (*PmbZ* II, 25267).

201 Oikonomides, *Listes*, p. 316.

202 Haldon, "Theory", p. 291.

year of cutting timber.[203] One may suppose that the same happened with the *basilikon ploimon*. But the supplying of wood must have also been ensured by fiscal contributions burdening the civil population. Leo VI mentions the existence of naval carpenters called *naupēgoi*, by specifying that each *dromōn* had to have on board personnel skilled in naval construction.[204] Military dockyards outside of Constantinople must have existed in each naval theme: Attaleia, Rhodos and Karpathos for the Kibyrrhaiōtai; Samos and Smyrna for Samos; Lemnos for the Aigion Pelagos.[205] In Naupaktos too there was a shipyard, as is witnessed by the seal of its *exartistēs*.[206]

The armament and tactics of the Byzantine navy were deeply influenced by a major transformation which happened in naval architecture with the birth of the *dromōn*. As we have seen, the latter was characterised by the replacement of the classical waterline ram by an above-water spur.[207] The purpose of the spur was not ramming and sinking the enemy's ship, but rather to destroy its oarage system in order to deprive it of its driving force.[208] Due to this fundamental innovation, war at sea in Byzantium abandoned the sophisticated naval manoeuvres witnessed in classical Antiquity, even if they were still described by Syrianos *magistros* and Leo the Wise. Both dwell upon tactics named as *periplous* (or "sailing around"), *paraplous* (or "sailing past"), *diekplous* (or "sailing through"), which made it possible to outflank or encircle the enemy.[209] The essential thing in naval battles, as in land battles, was preserving an ordered formation to protect the flanks of the ships. In these conditions missiles and throwing weapons for decimating the enemy's crew before close engagement and boarding became fundamental.[210] Among the artillery and hurling weapons, the most important one was doubtless the so-called Greek fire (variously named in the sources as πῦρ θαλάσσιον, "marine fire", ὕγρον πῦρ "wet fire", or ἐσκευασμένον πῦρ "processed fire").

203 This happened for example on the occasion of the Cretan expedition of 949: Haldon, "Theory", p. 219, l. 26; Pryor/Jeffreys, *The Age*, p. 556, 10.

204 Leo, *Naumachika*, ed. Jeffreys 5 = Leo VI Tactica XIX 5, ed. Dennis, p. 504.

205 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 435.

206 See *PmbZ* II, 26767 (dated to the first half of 10th century). On *aplēkta* and *neōria*, see also the list compiled by Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 52, footnote 3.

207 See above, n. 164.

208 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 384.

209 Syrianus, *Naval Warfare* 9. 24-41; Leo, *Naumachika*, ed. Jeffreys, 49-56 = Leo VI Tactica XIX 49-56, ed. Dennis, pp. 554-556. See Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 382-3; Dimitroukas, Ναυμαχικά, pp. 264-6; Haldon, *Commentary*, pp. 410-1.

210 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 402.

Antiquity had experienced a vast range of inflammable raw materials such as naphtha or petroleum for military aims, which could be thrown by catapults, hurled as "grenades" or poured over the enemy. The difference between these weapons and the Greek fire is that the latter resulted from a process of distillation of crude oil – it was "prepared" or "processed" – which augmented its inflammable capacity.[211] It was thrown by means of tubes connected to a force pump (*siphōn*) and a brazier which made it possible to eject the inflammable liquid. According to Theophanes it was used for the first time by the Byzantine navy in the course of the attack against Constantinople in 673-674; its inventor was a Christian from Heliopolis in Syria, named Kallinicos.[212] The biggest warships of 9th–10th century were fitted out with three *siphōnes*, one placed on the prow in the so-called *pseudopation*, and the other two on the flanks of the vessel.[213] *Chelandia* were armed with two *siphōnes*, one of them mounted at the prow. So that Greek fire could be employed efficaciously, it was necessary that ships carrying the flame-throwers arrived very close to the enemy.[214] Sources also make mention of hand flame-throwers (*cheirosiphōnes*),[215] but we do not know how they were used. Byzantium tried to keep the processing of Greek fire a secret. But it seems that the Muslims were able to learn how to prepare it, at least from the 9th century.[216]

Other artillery characterizing the armament of a *dromon* is described in the *Taktika* of Leo the Wise. Types of "cranes" (*gerania*) placed on board could rotate their upright post until the arm was over an enemy ship and then pour inflammable combustibles onto it.[217] There were also *toxobalistrai*, that is "bow-ballistrae", at the prow and along the sides of the ship, which could throw small missiles called "mice" (*mues*) or "flies" (*muiai*).[218] In the inventory of the Cretan expedition of 949 *toxobolistrai megalai* ("big bow-*ballistrae*"), *mikrai toxobolistrai* ("small *toxobolistrai*"), and *cheirotoxobolistrai* ("hand bow-*ballis-*

211 Haldon/Byrne, "A possible solution"; Haldon, "Greek fire"; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 629-31 (with former literature); Kolias, "Das Feuer".

212 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 354.

213 Haldon, "Theory", pp. 227, 278; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 560, 1.

214 Haldon/Byrne, "Greek Fire", p. 96.

215 Leo, *Naumachika*, Jeffreys 64 (= 65 Dain) = Leo VI Tactica XIX 64, ed. Dennis, p. 558. Haldon, *Commentary*, p. 413, thinks that were a "type of hand-hurled pot or 'grenade'"; see also Dimitroukas, *Ναυμαχικά*, p. 268, n. 77.

216 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 612.

217 Leo, *Naumachika*, ed. Jeffreys, 67 (= 68 Dain) = Leo VI Tactica XIX 67, ed. Dennis, p. 560.

218 Leo, *Naucmachika*, ed. Jeffeys, 60 = Leo VI Tactica XIX 60, ed. Dennis, p. 558.

trae") are mentioned.[219] The difference between the first and the second was probably in their size; some scholars have suggested that the "hand bow-ballistrae" should be identified with the crossbow.[220] The biggest "bow-ballistae" might throw their missiles up to a distance of about 500 m.[221]

Eventually, archers were placed on a protected sub-elevated structure, called a *xylokastron* ("wooden-castle"), which was built around the main mast of the ship or near it.[222] When *dromōnes* came to board the enemy's ships, a hand by hand combat began. The largest *dromōnes* may have carried 70 soldiers as supernumerary troops over their standard complement, who were all completely cuirassed (*kataphraktoi*).[223] On this occasion, the whole crew took part in the fight, but according to Leo the Wise only the oarsmen serving above deck were completely protected, while those serving below deck wore lighter

219 Haldon, "Theory", p. 225, 16; 227, l. 134; 229, l. 151; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 557, 15;562, 9; 568, 34. On *ballistai*: Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 239-45.

220 Dennis, "Flies"; Nishimura, "Crossbows"; Pétrin, "Philological notes".

221 According to Procopius, *Gothic War*, ed. Wirth/Haury, 1.21.17, the *ballistrai* threw darts at a distance of twice the bow; the estimate of 500 m is derived by integrating Procopius's assessment with the range of the Byzantine bow calculated by Amatuccio, *Peri toxeias*, pp. 30, 127.

222 Both Leo VI and Nikephoros Ouranos affirm that the *xylokastra* (platforms with palisades) were built toward the middle of the mast: Leo, *Naumachika*, ed. Jeffreys, 7 = Leo VI Tactica XIX 7, ed. Dennis, p. 504. Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 229-38 think that this description, as it stands, is meaningless, because it is difficult to imagine *xylokastra* "slung halfway up the mast" of the galley. Therefore, they suggest an amendment to the passage to either "around the middle mast", or "around the middle [i.e. half way between] of the masts" (p. 231); this solution had been proposed before, by Dimitroukas, *Ναυμαχικά*, p. 256, footnote 28 and has been accepted by Haldon, *Commentary*, p. 397. However, neither amendment seems easy to accept, given that manuscripts do not show any variance on this point. Furthermore, a possible relationship between (fortified) platforms (*kibōtia*) and the masts of the *dromons* is preserved in Theophanes *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 298, ll. 16-17 with regards to the arrival of the fleet of Heraclius in Constantinople on 610; see Cosentino, "Come i Bizantini", p. 247 (*pace* Karapli, "*Κιβώτια*", p. 116). Dimitroukas, *Ναυμαχικά*, p. 256, footnote 28, points out that Ibn al-Manqalī translates the passage of Leo the Wise in question mentioning that a tower, namely the *xylokastron*, was placed near or under the main mast (but the translation by Ahmad Shboul, in Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 647, translates "besides the mast"). To sum up, it is difficult to dismiss the testimony by Leo VI and Nikephoros Ouranos – who had certainly seen a *dromōn* more than once – and the possibility that the *xylokastra* were either sort of maintops or were built on the deck around the main mast remains open.

223 See above, footnote 137.

military equipment.[224] The latter consisted of padded felt jackets referred to as *neurika*, instead of mail corselets or lamellar cuirasses.[225]

5 Logistics and Expenditure

The organisation of naval expeditions constituted a much more serious problem for Byzantine logistics than that of land forces. The major difficulty was caused by the supply of water. It has been estimated that 8 litres per day were necessary for a mariner rowing 8 hours per day.[226] But even by diminishing this estimate a little to 6 litres daily, the total amount of water necessary for a standard *ousia* (crew) of a *chelandion* was considerable: around 648 litres, which might easily reach 700 litres if the officials are also included. The heavy *dromōnes* described in the inventory of the Cretan expeditions of 911, with 230 oarsmen and 70 marines each, must have needed little under 2 tonnes of water per day. The need for such an abundant supply of water gave rise to two important problems: 1) the storage of water on board; 2) the necessity of finding points to stop along the route in order to obtain drinking water.

We do not know precisely how water was stored on warships. It has been suggested that two containers may have been used with this purpose. The first was the *kados*, a wide amphora with a capacity of 25-27 litres, which is mentioned in the inventory of the Cretan expedition of 949.[227] According to John Haldon a much larger tank perhaps may have been the *kolymbomaton*, which is also mentioned in the inventory of 949.[228] It was placed in the bilge of the ship and must have had a capacity of about 730 litres, so it was able to provide a supply of water for almost a whole standard *ousia* of 108 men for one day. By calculating a consumption of about 700 litres per day, a galley would have needed about 3.5 tonnes of water for sailing for 5 days in the open sea without needing to re-supply on the mainland. Sailing more than 5 days without disembarking would have been possible but risky, if one considers that the deadweight of a *dromōn* was approximately about 29.5 tonnes, of which 8.5 tonnes was made up of its crew and 4.5-5 tonnes was for carrying water.[229]

224 Leo, *Naumachika*, ed. Jeffreys, 73 (= 74 Dain) = Leo VI Tactica XIX 73, ed. Dennis, p. 562.

225 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 381.

226 Ibid., p. 356.

227 Ibid., p. 361-2

228 Haldon, "Theory", pp. 277-8; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 365-6.

229 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 360.

Based on the calculations made by John Pryor, at an average speed of 4 knots and with an average of 14 hours of daylight during summer, in five days a *dromōn* would have covered a distance of about 412 km under oars.[230] But it was rare for a warship to sail consecutively for five days without landing. In the same way as there were for the army, for the navy there were staging points called *aplēkta* where ships stopped to re-supply, especially with fresh water. But while we know precisely the locations of the stationing places of the army along the major military roads leading from Constantinople to the eastern frontiers,[231] maritime *aplēkta* remain in large part unknown.[232] Phygela (modern-day Kuşadasi) is mentioned in the sources as an important point of concentration of military fleets. In the *Stadiodromikon* concerning the route between Constantinople and Crete, which is preserved in the *De ceremoniis*,[233] the only suitable anchorages and points of water supply were Chios, Ios and Phygela.[234] Important fleets were looking for large anchorages, taking into account that a ship needed about 80 metres of space around it for morring with two anchors.[235]

In the biggest naval expedition ever conducted in the history of the East Roman Empire, that against the Vandals in 468, the main state departments participated in its financing, namely the *praefectura praetorio*, the *sacrae largitiones* and the *res private* as well. The *praefectura* and the *largitiones* took upon themselves about two thirds of the cost; the *res privata*, one third.[236] Unfortunately, the available evidence does not provide details regarding the baggage train and the military equipment. Concerning the latter, more information is found in the often-mentioned inventories of the Cretan expeditions of 911-912 and 949, when, however, the state apparatus of the empire was remarkably changed in comparison with Late Antiquity.

The documentation about the campaign of 911-912 underlines the role taken by *stratēgoi* and thematic officials in preparing and storing foodstuffs and equipment in two *aplēkta* situated along the Anatolian coastal route leading to Syria: Phygela and Attaleia (modern-day Antalya). From the Thrakesion theme

230 Ibid., p. 370.

231 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *On imperial military expeditions*, ed. Haldon, pp. 80-81 (text), 155-7 (commentary).

232 A hint about maritime *aplēkta* is found in Leo, *Naumachika*, ed. Jeffreys, 30 = Leo VI Tactica XIX 30, ed. Dennis, p. 546. Dimitroukas, *Ναυμαχικά*, p. 262, footnote 50; Haldon, *Commentary*, p. 404.

233 Huxley, "A Porphyrogenitan Portulan".

234 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 373. On maritime routes Malamut, *Îles*, II, pp. 536-52.

235 Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, p. 374.

236 Quotation of sources in Cosentino, "Fine della fiscalità", pp. 21-26 (with former literature).

20,000 *modioi* of barley, 40,000 *modioi* of wheat, biscuits and flour, along with 30,000 measures of wine and 10,000 animals for slaughter were prepared.[237] It is not clear from the text where these items were to be amassed. It is likely that the storage place was Phygela, and the same inventory clearly points out that the *stratēgos* of Samos, with the help of the *prōtonotarios* of the same theme, had to amass different kinds of nails, bolts of linen for firing and caulking, and ladders.[238] In Attaleia, both from the Anatolikon and the Kibyrrhaiots theme, 20,000 *modioi* of barley, 60,000 *modioi* of grain, biscuits and wheat had to be deposited.[239] The office of the *koitōn* (bedchamber of the emperor) was to integrate equipment by providing caltrops, sacks, mattocks, mallets, rings, bolts, shackles and rams. As far as foodstuffs were concerned, John Haldon calculated that there was enough to supply the expeditionary corps of 911-912 for about 20 days.[240]

While the evidence concerning the latter expedition underlines the role played by the thematic administration in supplying the army, the inventory of 949 provides much more information about the intervention of the central bureaux. This difference, of course, may depend on the partiality by which the evidence concerning the two expeditions has been handed down to us. But it mirrors also, in part at least, the different purposes of the two campaigns, that of 911-912 being targeted primarily on Syria (and only secondarily on Crete), whereas that of 949 was planned expressly for the re-conquest of Crete. Whatever the case, in 949 three central departments seem to have provided for the large part of the military equipment: the *Eidikon*, the *Vestiarion* and the *Koitōn*. The first was a storehouse of precious goods (such as gold and silk) and of various materials for the army and the navy.[241] A sub-department of the *Eidikon* was the *Armamenton*, a workshop for the production of weapons; in 9th century Constantinople there were possibly two large and important arms-storehouse, one of them near the Magnaura palace.[242] In 949 the *Eidikon* (undoubtedly by means of the *Armamenton*) provided both naval equipment and weapons (sheets of lead, caltrops, axes, small sails, wax, spades, tubs, silk-spartum bow strings, amphorae, goats' covers for *dromons*, and leather slings).[243]

237 See the analysis by Haldon, "Theory", p. 288.

238 Ibid., p. 211.

239 Haldon, "Theory", p. 211, ll. 128-31.

240 Ibid., p. 300.

241 Oikonomides, *Listes*, pp. 316-7; Haldon, "Theory", p. 289; Brandes, *Finanzverwaltung*, pp. 166-72.

242 Haldon, "Theory", p. 292.

243 Haldon, "Theory", p. 227, ll. 126-138; pp. 229-33 (expenses in cash); Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age,* pp. 558-60, 563-8 (expenses in cash).

In this role it was flanked by the *basilikon vestiarion*, another department under the direct supervision of the emperor, which included the Constantinopolitan mint as well as storehouses of military and naval equipment.[244]

It worth noting that while the *Eidikon* provided relatively less specialized naval fitting, the *Vestiarion* supplied more specialised tools, such as *siphōnia* (pumps or tubes for the Greek fire), *gonatia* (cranes), oar sleeves, block masts, windlasses, sails, pavesades, anchors and spurs. Even in the expedition of 949 a minor participation by the *Koitōn* is witnessed: it provided the *droungarios* of the fleet with precious garments, such as leggings, undershirts, breeches and purple-dyed hoods as well.[245] A comparison between the two inventories shows that while the expedition of 911-912 experienced a major contribution from the thematic resources, that of 949 was almost entirely financed by the central departments. This happened, doubtless, because in 949 the military role of the *basilikon ploimon* was much more superior than that which was represented by the thematic fleets.

Still in the age of Emperor Andronikos II (1282-1328), when the fleet was in decline, its maintenance took up 18.6 per cent of the state finances. As a matter of fact, Nikephoros Gregoras informs us that out of one million *hyperpyra* per year entering the imperial treasury during Andronikos' reign, he intended to maintain 20 warships and 3,000 cavalrymen on a permanent footing, and to employ the remaining money for receiving ambassadors, paying surrounding peoples and coping with imperial affairs.[246] Plausible estimates about the annual salary of seamen and cavalrymen after *c*. 1321 amounted to 186,000 *hyperpyra* for the former and 225,000 for the latter.[247] All available information regarding expeditions in which the navy proved to be essential for final success testifies to very high costs. The expenses for the re-conquest of Africa from the Vandals ranges in the sources from 7,408,000 *nomismata* (Candidus and John Lydus) to 9,360,000 *nomismata* (Priscus and Procopius).[248] On this occasion the fleet was composed of 500 vessels, of different sizes and typology, among which were 92 warships.[249] The campaign launched against Syria and Crete in 911-912 entailed a total disbursement of 239,000 *nomismata* for military wages, considering the seamen who embarked on the imperial fleet (126,680 *nomis-*

244 Haldon, "Theory", p. 227, ll. 139-149, p. 233, ll. 215-27; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 560-1, 568-70. On the *basilikon vestiarion* see Oikonomides, *Listes*, p. 316; Brandes, *Finanzverwaltung*, pp. 172-8.

245 Haldon, "Theory", p. 233, ll. 228-233.

246 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Roman History* 8. 5, ed. Schopen, p. 317.

247 See Hendy, *Studies*, p. 163.

248 Cosentino, "Fine della fiscalità", pp. 22-1 (with quotation of the sources).

249 Procopius, *Vandal War*, ed. Wirth/Haury, 1.11.13, 15-16.

mata), those on the thematic fleets (Kibyrrhaiōtai: 15,954 *nomismata*; Samos: 14,483 *nomismata*; Aigaion Pelagos: 11,091 *nomismata*), as well as the Mardaites (41,584 *nomismata*) and cavalrymen (29,326 *nomismata*).[250] According to Niketas Choniates, the Italian campaign organized by Manuel Komnenos in 1155-1156 would have cost 300 *kentēnaria*, namely 2 million and 160,000 *nomismata*.[251] In this case the expenses for the fleet must have been minimal in comparison with the total amount, for only 14 warships took part in the expedition.[252] But the navy was a considerable burden of military expenditure during Manuel's reign, if we consider only the number of warships that were constructed for the naval expedition against Egypt in 1169 (200 ships).[253]

The expenditure for the navy was higher than that for the army due to the basic reason that the former also included the cost of the ships. Even the best constructed vessel did not last more than 25 or 30 years.[254] This points to the need periodically to renovate the military fleets. We do not have information about the cost of a single warship of any kind. The inventory of the Cretan expedition of 949 preserves interesting references to sums paid by the *Eidikon* for the purchase of parts (fabric and manufacturing of sails, blocks, oars, caulking) of 9 *karabia* and 2 *monēreis*. These sums amounted to 113.45 *nomismata* per vessel, and they do not take into account the cost of timber, as well as the specialized manpower for shipbuilding and the armament. Considering that *karabia* and *monēreis* were small ships, we may hypothesize that *chelandia* and *dromōnes* had a cost which was three times higher at least. From the Life of Nilus the Younger we are informed that the inhabitants of Rossano (Calabria) burned some *chelandia* that an imperial officer, Nikephoros *magistros*, had ordered to be constructed with the purpose of attacking Muslim Sicily.[255] The hagiographer does not specify the number of ships, but he says that their monetary equivalent accounted for more than 2,000 *nomismata*.[256] Putting together the information drawn by the inventory of 949 and the Life of Nilus it is not unreasonable to conclude that the expenses for a single *chelandion* in 10th–11th century Calabria (a region rich in timber) was between 400 and 600 *nomismata*. This means that in the case of the expedition of 911-912 along with the 209,792 *nomismata* paid for the salary of the seamen, we reach a figure

250 Haldon, "Theory", pp. 204-7; Pryor/Jeffreys, *Age*, pp. 550-2.

251 Choniates, ed. van Dieten, p. 97; see Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 268, n. 4.

252 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 253.

253 Ibid., p. 265.

254 Ibid., p. 161.

255 *Life of Nilus the Younger* 60 (p. 101 Giovannelli).

256 Ibid. 62 (p. 102).

roughly ranging from 60,200 (400 x 173) to 103,800 (600 x 173) *nomismata* for the value of the warships.

The fiscal apparatus for the financing of navy is obscure and only occasionally witnessed in the sources. During Late Antiquity and until the first half of the 7th century service in the military marine was probably borne by the Praetorian prefecture. Between the 8th to the 10th century the maintenance of the seamen enrolled in the thematic fleets had to be based on the same mechanisms regulating the soldiers who served in the army, namely on a certain quota of land ownership that they had to possess. In the famous law concerning the *stratiōtika ktēmata* issued by Constantine Porphyrogenitus in *c.* 947/948 the minimum share of property requested to the seamen of the Kibyrrhaiōtai, Samos and Aigaion Pelagos was valued at 4 *litrai* (288 *nomismata*), whereas for those serving in the imperial navy it was valued at 2 *litrai* (144 *nomismata*).[257]

Based on a passage by the *De ceremoniis*, it seems that before the middle of the 10th century these shares of immovable property were slightly higher: 5 *litrai* (310 *nomismata*) or, at least, 4 *litrai*, for a cavalryman, and 3 *litrai* (216 *nomismata*) for a mariner of the imperial fleet.[258] But as we have seen, on the occasion of important military expeditions both thematic and imperial seamen received a salary. The former by means of the *prōtonotarioi* of the *themata*; the latter from different central departments, among which the *Eidikon* and the *basilikon vestiarion* were the most important ones. Owing to the fluidity of the administrative apparatuses of the Byzantine Empire it is likely that the maintenance of the *basilikon ploimon* varied according to the circumstances.

In any case, the payment of salaries, military equipment and naval fittings was only one of the items which made up the public budget concerning the navy. There were also the expenses related to ship construction, which might be either supported directly by the imperial or state treasuries, or financed by indirect taxation. Forms of *angariai*, that is compulsory works requested of the population from the state, are often quoted in the sources with reference to shipbuilding, such as the above mentioned episode drawn from the Life of Nilus witnesses. Known under different names such as *kataskeuē* or *ktisis ploiōn* ("fitting/construction of ships"), or as *karabopoiia* ("construction of vessels"), these compulsory activities were mentioned in the lists of fiscal exemptions dating to 11th/12th centuries.[259] They concerned not only warships, but also

257 Svoronos, *Novelles* 5.1.4 (pp. 119-20); English translation and commentary by McGeer, *Land Legislation*, pp. 71-6 (with former bibliography).

258 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske, II, 49 (I, pp. 695-696). See also Cosentino, "Rileggendo", pp. 53-4.

259 Oikonomides, *Fiscalité*, pp. 111-2, 302.

transport ships. Especially from the 11th century onwards these compulsory services sometimes included the obligation of providing crews for the ships. They might be commuted to a cash payment instead of direct service.

In the 12th century, Attica and the Peloponnese seem to replace the role formerly exercised by the coastal regions of Asia Minor as the main reservoir for shipbuilding and the recruiting of crews. It is not by chance that in references to these regions a special tax on fleet is attested, which was levied by officers called *ploimologoi*.[260] It is likely that these officials were the same ones who collected the *pleustikai strateiai*, "military maritime taxes", mentioned in a passage of Nicetas Choniates.[261] The latter says that these contributions were abolished by John II Komnenos at the advice of John Poutzes, one of his intimate counsellors, who argued that they were no longer necessary for the maintenance of the fleet and could be forfeited in the imperial treasury. From this time onwards, according to Nicetas, the financing of the fleet would have been paid directly by the imperial treasury whenever necessary. Perhaps the *pleustikē strateia* was the main tax levied by coastal and island populations from the middle of the 11th to the middle of the 12th century in order to be destined to the recruitment and payment of seamen. Before the reign of John II, it is likely that it had to be collected from the financial office of the *megas doux*. As a consequence of the decision of John II it seems that throughout the 13th and 14th centuries a regular taxation for the navy no longer existed. In the Palaeologan period the fleet must have been financed only by the imperial treasury and indirect taxation. In late Byzantine Greece, naval districts called *horia,* attested at Athens, Thebes, Patras, Modone, Corinth, Argos-Nauplia and Larissa, were obliged to provide maritime contingents.[262]

6 Conclusion

Ships, organisation, weaponry, as well as infrastructures and economic investments concerning naval warfare were profoundly influenced by the confrontation with the enemies of the empire. The system reached a certain stability between the second half of the 7th and the 10th century, during the long period in which Byzantium was engaged in an ongoing struggle with

260 Michael Choniates, *Letters,* ed. Kolovou, 65, ll. 34-35, 56; see also Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, p. 276.

261 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 55; see also the comment by Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 230-1.

262 Ahrweiler, *Byzance*, pp. 277-8.

Islam. Also between the 11th and the 12th centuries the Byzantine government showed interest in the organization of naval warfare, even though this period was marked by relevant discontinuity with regard to the imperial system's structures. It was then that the paradox occurred, well emphasized by E. Malamut, that while the empire's maritime character was incrementally accentuated its fleet began to decline.[263] In overall terms, the navy was always conceived as being an auxiliary instrument to the army. Direct struggles with the enemy in the deep sea remained limited. Fleets in Byzantium were necessary for carrying men, besieging or protecting cities, as well as for attacking the enemy in its own territory. Armament and naval tactics were strongly influenced by these strategic functions. Naval artillery always counted for more than ramming and even, perhaps, boarding.

But naval warfare also entailed very high economic investments. On equal terms of military salary, the expenses for both naval weaponry and shipbuilding increased the maintaining of four *chelandia* by about 1/3 in comparison with a regiment of the army of 400 men. This situation was aggravated by the difficulty in recruiting experienced crews, because people were much more afraid of naval warfare than they were of war on land. However, the *thalassophobia*[264] and the difficulty of the life on board, as well as the same approximation of the navigation systems, were not sufficient factors in themselves for restraining the attention of the emperors towards the war at sea. They were masters of an empire that overlooked the sea to the north, south and east. With all the limitations that have been highlighted in this essay, no other state power in the Middle Ages possessed a navy and an organization related to naval warfare comparable to those of the Byzantine Empire, at least until the twelfth century.

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263 Malamut, "Les insulaires".

264 See Koder, "Aspekte der Thalassokratia", p. 109.

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CHAPTER 10

Siege Warfare: The Art of Re-capture

Christos G. Makrypoulias

Throughout its history, Byzantium was an empire of cities. The historical period we call "Byzantine" began with the fortification of a site on the Bosphorus and ended with its final capture eleven centuries later; but such a remark would only belittle the significance of the numerous urban centres that dotted the landscape of Eastern Rome. Food and taxes might derive mostly from the countryside, but it was behind city walls that Byzantium's administrative apparatus, commercial networks, and industrial infrastructure resided – not to mention large numbers of her subjects.[1] Given the vital importance these held for the Byzantines, it is easy to see why their strategy was geared towards combining troops, treasure, technology, and tactics for the purpose of protecting/reclaiming those fortifications.[2]

Scholarly interest in ancient and medieval military engineering predates the dawn of scientific historiography; however, the systematic study of the part siege warfare played in medieval history is a recent development.[3] While the former evolved into a confrontation between two "national" schools and their respective reconstructions of several types of ancient and medieval artillery,[4] the latter was hampered by the *idée fixe* that battles are the only decisive factor in warfare.[5] It is only recently that military historians have come to the fore

1 See Sarandi, "Towns", for literature on Byzantine cities and urban life.

2 On Byzantine strategy, see Haldon, *Warfare*, pp. 34-106.

3 See Bachrach, "Siege Warfare".

4 The "French school" was funded by Emperor Napoleon III, while the "German school" was under the patronage of Kaiser Wilhelm II. On this antagonism, see Rogers, *Latin Siege Warfare*, pp. 257-61, and Wilkins, *Roman Artillery*, pp. 24, 58-59.

5 The notion that pitched battles decide wars permeated the work of von Clausewitz, and the Prussian strategist's ideas influenced Hans Delbrück, the greatest military historian in continental Europe at the time. Anglo-Saxon historiography moved independently towards the same direction with Creasy, *Fifteen Decisive Battles*. On their combined influence, see Bachrach, "Siege Warfare", pp. 119-22.

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who are willing to attribute to Byzantine/medieval siegecraft its rightful place in the historiography.[6]

A brief comment on the use of "*re*-capture" is in order. Antiquity witnessed the emergence and subsequent use of siege warfare as the main tool of offensive strategy in the hands of expansionist empires.[7] By the time the eastern Roman dominions had morphed into the Byzantine Empire, however, the protection of imperial territories no longer rested with legions and auxiliaries holding the *limes*. Instead, a strategy of elastic defence had been adopted: a network of "hard points" (usually fortified cities) protecting the interior against invaders.[8] Since a city captured by the enemy had to be reclaimed to maintain the network's integrity, it is clear that, even when part of offensive tactics, siegecraft was in effect a defensive weapon. What follows is a short overview of this art of re-capture.

1 The Sources

The study of Byzantine siegecraft has been shaped by the availability of sources, their varying quality and uneven distribution between the Early and Middle Byzantine periods. This disparity has caused researchers quite a few issues.[9]

When dealing with narrative sources, Byzantinists usually differentiate between histories and chronicles. For our purpose, however, another distinction is more appropriate, one that sets apart classicizing historians cast in the mould of the great masters of military history.[10] The finest examples are Ammianus Marcellinus[11] and Procopius;[12] other early historians might also have proved useful, had their work survived in a less fragmentary manner.[13] They provide detailed descriptions of engines and siege techniques, of which

6 The first full-length monographs were Rogers, *Siege Warfare*, and Bradbury, *Medieval Siege*. Three dissertations on Byzantine siegecraft have yet to be published in book form: Giros, *Recherches sur la poliorcétique byzantine*; McCotter, *Siege Warfare*; Makrypoulias, *Πολιορκητική τέχνη*. The most recent treatment is Petersen, *Siege Warfare*.

7 Eph'al, *The City Besieged*.

8 Luttwak, *Roman Empire*, pp. 127-90, esp. pp. 132-34.

9 Makrypoulias, "Προβλήματα μεθοδολογίας".

10 Kelso, "Artillery as a Classicizing Digression".

11 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth. Cf. Crump, *Ammianus Marcellinus*; Austin, *Ammianus on Warfare*.

12 Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth; cf. Kaegi, "Procopius the Military Historian".

13 See in general Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*.

they usually had first-hand knowledge.[14] This contrasts markedly with the non-military background of Zosimus and Agathias,[15] as well as with most Middle Byzantine narratives. Historians of military technology have many reasons to be dissatisfied with 7th-11th century sources.[16] Not only is there very little historiography for the 7th and 8th centuries (an age which may have been crucial in the development of military technology);[17] surviving narrative sources also leave something to be desired when describing sieges. We often get little more than a few technical terms tossed about, usually without further clarification,[18] or fragments of anecdotal information that cannot be cross-checked for lack of parallel sources. In fact, even when a siege is mentioned in multiple sources, it is difficult to form a clear picture: many Byzantine historians were happy to omit all but the most sensational storylines – with detailed references to military technology seldom being considered sensational.[19] It is only in the 12th century that Anna Komnene composed a narrative approaching the high standards of the classicizing military historians of Late Antiquity.[20]

One might argue that criticizing Middle Byzantine narrative sources is unfair, since many were chronicles, deemed less useful for military historians.[21] However, these may actually prove to be as good as the works of classicizing historians up to a point, thanks to the characteristics of this particular genre:[22] universal chroniclers like Malalas[23] tend to devote a good part of their work to the vicissitudes affecting local communities, including sieges, while their non-Attic Greek means that contemporary technical terms are more likely to be

14 Trombley, "Ammianus Marcellinus and Fourth-Century Warfare", pp. 24-25 (on Ammianus as a staff officer responsible for the siege train). Procopius was present at the 537-38 siege of Rome; Howard-Johnston, "The Education and Expertise of Procopius", pp. 25-30, suggests Procopius was a trained military engineer/architect.

15 Although Zosimus' chapters on the 363 expedition probably derived from an eyewitness participant; see Fornara, "Julian's Persian Expedition".

16 For Middle Byzantine historiography, see the relevant chapters in Hunger, *Literatur*, vol. 1.

17 Haldon, "Primary sources", pp. 23-24.

18 Cf. Makrypoulias, "Προβλήματα μεθοδολογίας", pp. 32-34.

19 Neither Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, ed. Hase, p. 170, lines 12-13, nor Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 323, lines 5-28, mention sapping operations when describing the siege of Nicaea by rebel forces in 977; we only hear of it from Anna Komnene, the garrison commander's great-granddaughter.

20 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis.

21 On aspects of methodology, cf. DeVries, "The Use of Chronicles".

22 Chronicles as "light reading": Hunger, *Literatur*, vol. 1, pp. 252-54, 257-78.

23 Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn.

mentioned; it also means that accusations of *mimesis* are not levelled at chroniclers as easily as they are against classicizing historians.[24]

Local chronicles are usually written by eyewitnesses or people with local knowledge and contain information that might have often been unavailable even to the best military historian in Constantinople.[25] Equally valuable are eyewitness accounts of sieges of major cities written shortly after the events;[26] however, although some of these accounts are widely used by modern historians, others have proved to be rather controversial.[27]

Apart from narrative sources, references to siege warfare may also be found in works of poetry and rhetoric. Some are similar to local chronicles, describing the defence of a city; others celebrate the capture of enemy strongholds.[28] Finally, bits and pieces of information pertaining to siege engines and techniques are contained in assorted legal texts, inscriptions and documents dating from the Early and Middle Byzantine periods.[29] These texts can be very useful at times; one disadvantage, however, is that they contain technical terms modern researchers often find very difficult to interpret.[30]

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24 Hunger, "On the Imitation (*Mimesis*) of Antiquity", qualified by the earlier remarks of Moravcsik, "Klassizismus in der byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung". It was the questioning of Priscus' (and Dexippus') credibility by Thompson, "Priscus of Panium, Fragment 1*b*", however, that became a *cause célèbre* among Byzantinists. Although Blockley, "Dexippus and Priscus", showed that imitation should not be taken as evidence of copycat untrustworthiness, *mimesis* still casts a long shadow: cf. Sullivan, "Offensive Siege Warfare", p. 181, and Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, p. 187.

25 The most illuminating example is the Persian siege of Amida (502-03): the account of Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 1.7.3-32, is overshadowed by the wealth of additional information found in Syriac chronicles; cf. Debié, "Du Grec en Syriaque".

26 Howard-Johnston, "The Siege of Constantinople in 626", pp. 131-32.

27 A controversy still rages regarding the authenticity of the so-called *Miracles of St Demetrius*, ed. Lemerle, which has been questioned by Speck, "De miraculis Sancti Demetrii". A similar case is that of the 10th-century Kameniates, *Sack of Thessaloniki*, ed. Böhlig, which Kazhdan, "Some Questions", dated to the 15th century. A parallel defence of both texts is mounted by Frendo, "The *Miracles of St. Demetrius* and the Capture of Thessaloniki".

28 For the poems and speeches describing the defence of Constantinople in 626, see above, n. 25. The siege of Chandax (960-61) is celebrated in Theodosios Diakonos, *Sack of Crete*, ed. Criscuolo.

29 Cf. the administrative documents – redacted though they appear to be – describing the preparations for expeditions against Crete and S. Italy: Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske (commentary in Haldon, "Theory and Practice").

30 Haldon, "Theory and Practice", pp. 268-79.

Another potentially useful source of information on Byzantine siege warfare is the work of non-Byzantine historians and technical experts writing in languages other than Greek. Oriental narrative sources written outside the Byzantine world in Syriac, Armenian or Arabic are relatively straightforward, untainted by *mimesis* and penned by men who came from societies which were far more mechanically-minded than Byzantium.[31] Western historians writing about the (not always friendly) contacts between Byzantium and the West before and after the First Crusade often add to our knowledge of Byzantine siege techniques.[32] Moving beyond historiography, we should make a particular mention of the manual of Ṭarsūsī, a late 12th-century military expert whose text stands out as an excellent example of the Islamic world's love of engineering.[33]

A significant amount of military literature had been produced by the end of the Middle Byzantine period.[34] Most of it dealt with strategy and tactics, although every major treatise included a chapter or two on siegecraft as a matter of course; there were also two 10th-century works dedicated specifically to poliorcetics.[35] If narrative sources form the skeleton in a study of Byzantine siegecraft, then those military manuals and technical texts should have been its flesh and blood. That this is only partially true may be attributed to a number of reasons. One would be the difficulty in placing some of these texts within a particular historical framework, because of the inability to date them or attribute them to a specific author.[36] Another can be traced to their aforementioned use of obscure and often anachronistic terminology.[37] Finally, the key reason is their tendency to follow in the footsteps of their Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman predecessors: combined with a lack of knowledge regarding

31 E.g. Usāmah Ibn-Munqidh, *Memoirs*, trans. Hitti, although not written as a work of "professional" history, contains first-hand observations of Byzantine artillery in action.

32 A brief overview may be found in Rogers, *Siege Warfare*, pp. 11-16, 92-94, 193-95.

33 Ṭarsūsī, *Manual*, trans. Cahen.

34 Dain, "Les stratégistes byzantins" (abridged in Hunger, *Literatur*, vol. 2, pp. 323-40) remains the main work of reference. See also Sullivan, "Byzantine military manuals".

35 *Parangelmata Poliorketika*, ed. Sullivan, is a re-working of Apollodorus of Damascus; the other is known by its conventional title, *De obsidione toleranda*, ed. Van den Berg (text republished, with annotated English translation, in Sullivan, "Instructional Manual").

36 A telling example is the so-called *On Strategy*, ed. Dennis; cf. Rance, "The date of the military compendium of Syrianus Magister". Another is the aforementioned *De obsidione toleranda*: a closer look shows that it was compiled not in the second quarter of the 10th century, as previously thought, but *c.* 990; cf. Makrypoulias, "Η χρονολόγηση του De obsidione toleranda".

37 See Kolias, "Tradition und Erneuerung"; cf. above, n. 30.

attribution, date, or context, this blatant *mimesis* casts serious doubts on a text's credibility, thus diminishing its value as a source of information on Byzantine siegecraft.[38] However, researchers have now proposed a number of criteria that may be used to ascertain with a fair amount of confidence a technical work's degree of originality; this has led to a better understanding of Byzantine military literature and its use in the study of siege warfare.[39]

By now it must be painfully clear that this overview is skewed towards written sources. This is because archaeology has been unable to offer anything more than bits and pieces; unlike experts in Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman military technology, who have at their disposal an impressive array of finds,[40] Byzantinists are forced to make do with very little indeed, and most of that comes from Late Antiquity. The most important archaeological finds were metal parts of 4th-century arrow-shooting engines unearthed in two Danube forts;[41] this fortuitous discovery filled some of the gaps in our knowledge, while simultaneously prompting the identification of similar parts from other assemblages.[42] Excavations of sites in other regions of the Empire – or just outside its borders – have yielded further material, some of it slightly pre-dating the Byzantine period.[43] The study of defensive arrangements may also contribute to our knowledge of contemporary siege practices, although it was only in the last decades that a systematic approach became possible through the publication of general works on Byzantine fortifications.[44] Finally,

38 A cursory examination of Byzantine treatises would bear witness to this: Leo's *Taktika* lean heavily on Maurice's *Strategikon*, and the *Parangelmata Poliorketika* are a copy of a 2nd century CE text. This tendency is particularly poignant in collections of military texts, such as the one edited by J.-A. de Foucault, *Strategemata*, Paris 1949.

39 Sullivan, "Offensive Siege Warfare", pp. 182-93, cross-referenced Leo's *Taktika* with other 10th-century treatises written by professional soldiers, concluding that most of what Leo writes on siege warfare is authentic 10th-century practice. Cf. Dagron/Mihăescu, *La traité sur la guérilla*, pp. 141-44, for further criteria on the credibility of 10th-century handbooks.

40 For a fairly complete list of such finds, see Baatz, *Bauten und Katapulte*, pp. 280-83.

41 First published in Gudea/Baatz, "Teile spätrömischer Ballisten".

42 Similar finds: Baatz/Feugère, "Éléments d'une catapulte romaine trouvée à Lyon"; Boube-Piccot, "Eléments de catapultes en bronze"; Kayumov/Minchev, "The *καμβέστριον*".

43 Mitchell, "The Siege of Cremna"; Leriche, "Techniques de guerre sassanides et romaines" (siege mines at Doura-Europos); James, "Military Equipment", p. 224 (missile points and shafts from Doura-Europos). See also Christie, "Invasion or Invitation?", p. 101 (late 6th-/early 7th-century catapult bolts in N. Italy).

44 Lawrence, "Skeletal History"; Foss/Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*.

experimental archaeology is another research method applicable to the study of military technology.[45]

Material sources are not limited to archaeological finds; depictions of war machines in Byzantine illuminated manuscripts are also of some use. Such illustrations tend to belong to one of two traditions: they are either drawings similar to modern diagrams, copied from Hellenistic/Graeco-Roman originals and usually found in manuscripts containing ancient technical treatises, or artistic representations of war machines in action, such as those of Vat. gr. 1605 (late 10th-early 11th century) containing the *Parangelmata Poliorketika*.[46] The best-known illuminated manuscript of the period is the so-called "Madrid Skylitzes" (Matr. gr. Vitr. 26-2), which contains numerous miniatures depicting sieges and has been used extensively in the study of Byzantine military technology.[47]

As it happens, however, artefacts and works of art are susceptible to the same drawbacks that can potentially limit the usefulness of written sources, plus the accidental nature of the archaeological discoveries themselves: a victorious army would most probably carry off enemy artillery, leaving nothing for future archaeologists to find,[48] while the ruinous state of many a Byzantine fortification plays havoc with our ability to extract usable data from them.[49] Date or attribution may also prove difficult: the Madrid Skylitzes had been variously placed in the 12th, 13th or 14th century, until it was securely dated to the 12th (mainly through palaeographic evidence),[50] thus allowing scholars to place it in the court of the Norman rulers of Sicily.[51] These and other issues are what we have to overcome when faced with the task of drawing an accurate picture of Byzantine siege warfare.

45 For the theoretical parameters of experimental archaeology as a serious field of scholarship, see Griffiths, "Re-enactment as research".

46 Sullivan, *Siegecraft*, pp. 8-14.

47 Hoffmeyer, *Military Equipment*, esp. pp. 125-39.

48 This would account for the fact that the excavations at Dura-Europos produced many missiles, but not a single part of the engines that projected them: cf. James, "Military Equipment", p. 227.

49 Cf. Gregory, *Roman Military Architecture*, I, pp. 151-53.

50 Wilson, "The Madrid Skylitzes".

51 Ševčenko, "The Madrid Manuscript".

2 The Technology: War Machines and Siege Works

Ever since the peoples of Mesopotamia and the Near East developed the earliest rudiments of offensive siege technology, it became clear that there were only three ways to attack enemy walls: go over them, through them, or under them. Millennia later, the Byzantines faced the same challenges. This is a brief survey of the machines and techniques they had at their disposal to accomplish those tasks.

When it came to equipment used to scale the walls of an enemy city, ladders (*klimakes*, *skalai*) have always been the least expensive and easiest to build.[52] Often mentioned in narrative sources, they were seldom described;[53] however, details regarding their construction may be found in manuals, while depictions in manuscript illuminations give us a rough idea of their appearance.[54]

According to the prescriptions of technical texts, ladders were either single-piece (*monoxyloi*) or composite ones (*synthetoi*).[55] A new type appears in the Middle Byzantine period, with wheels for facilitating rapid movement; it is mentioned by Emperor Leo VI in the early 10th century[56] and described in detail by *Parangelmata Poliorketika*[57] (a description not copied from the work of Apollodorus, thus showing that the wheeled ladder may have been a Byzantine innovation or adaptation of an ancient device).[58]

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52 This has led some contemporary authorities to treat ladders with contempt: cf. Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, ed. Önnerfors, 4.21, whose only comment is that they can prove dangerous – to the attackers.

53 Ladders were usually built proportionate to the height of each specific wall (the higher the walls, the taller and more fragile the ladders; cf. *On Strategy*, ed. Dennis, 12.3-7), since they were supposed to be placed against it at a specific angle, so as not to be easily overturned, or collapse under the weight of the assault party. Judging from the descriptions of narrative sources, ladders were used either in massive assaults against enemy fortifications (Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 2.7.8-10; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. Van Dieten, p. 134, lines 1-2) or in commando-style operations under cover of night or in bad weather (Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 1.7.20-29; Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn, p. 390, lines 77-79; Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, ed. Hase, p. 82, lines 1-10).

54 Hoffmeyer, *Military Equipment*, p. 129 and figs. 37, 45; Sullivan, *Siegecraft*, figs. 19, 22.

55 *Parangelmata Poliorketika*, ed. Sullivan, 46.16-22.

56 Leo VI Tactica, XV 27 ed. Dennis, p. 362, l. 167-71: *καὶ σκάλαι σύνθετοι ἢ ἐπιτεθεῖσαι τῷ τείχει ἢ ἐν ὀρθοῖς ξύλοις ἐπικείμεναι καὶ διὰ τροχῶν προσφερόμεναι*.

57 *Parangelmata Poliorketika*, ed. Sullivan, 46; cf. 49.1-19, describing the drawbridge (*ἐπιβάθρα* or *διαβάθρα*) used with this type of ladder. For depictions in the Vat. gr. 1605, see above, n. 54.

58 Cf. Sullivan, *Siegecraft*, pp. 226-27. The anonymous author's description is reminiscent of

Technically speaking, the next construction to be described was a combination of two methods of assault: going through the walls, and going over them. Siege mounds had been around since the dawn of poliorcetic technology, and were widely used in the Near East; reaching all the way to the top of the enemy wall, they were supposed to facilitate the approach of battering rams to breach the battlements and allow a storming party to mount the wall, covered by archers and slingers.[59]

Siege mounds are found in narrative and technical texts under various Greek and Latin terms, most of them simply denoting an earthen ramp,[60] while 6th-century Syriac sources call them "mules" – possibly because they were meant to carry a heavy load of troops and engines.[61] Although this terminology implies nothing more than a pile of dirt,[62] the sources stress the fact that timber was the basis of every siege mound.[63] The best description of a siege ramp comes from Procopius; although referring to a Persian mound, there is no doubt that Byzantine siege works would be similar. Trees were felled and laid, leaves and all, in a crisscross fashion before the wall. Earth and stones were piled on top of the base, and then more logs were added. The process was repeated until the ramp reached the battlements.[64] The survival of this technique well into the Middle Byzantine period is attested by Kekaumenos: the defenders were instructed to counter a siege mound by penetrating its interior and setting fire to the timber, as a group of Bulgarians did when besieged by Basil II.[65]

The use of siege towers against walled cities was yet another method the Byzantines inherited from their Greek and Roman predecessors. Thanks to the

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the *σαμβύκη*, a covered ladder usually mounted on ships and used for assaulting coastal fortifications: see Lendle, *Texte und Untersuchungen*, pp. 107-13, 167-76.

59 See Eph'al, *The City Besieged*, pp. 82-97, esp. pp. 84-90.

60 *Agger*: Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 20.11.17, Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, ed. Önnerfors, 4.15.7; *ἀγέστα*: Maurice, *Strategikon*, ed. Dennis, 10.1.55 (Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 2.26.29 prefers *ἄγεστα*, although some manuscripts retain *ἀγέστα*); *λόφος χειροποίητος*: Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 1.7.14; *χῶμα*: Zosimus, *Historia nova*, ed. Paschoud, II[1].39.20, Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 2.27.1; *χωματισμός*: Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Litavrin, p. 196, lines 1, 4, 8, 12, 13; p. 198, lines 2, 5, 9-10.

61 Pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle*, trans. Trombley/Watt, p. 54; Pseudo-Zachariah, *Chronicle*, trans. Hamilton/Brooks, p. 153.

62 Cf. *Campaign Organization and Tactics*, ed. Dennis, 27.8: *καὶ χωμάτων σωρεία εἰς βουνὸν ἀποτελούμενα*.

63 Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, ed. Önnerfors, 4.15.

64 Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 2.26.23-24.

65 Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Litavrin, p. 196, lines 11-13, 32-34; p. 198, lines 1-12.

complexity of their construction and their magnitude, wooden assault towers are well-represented in both narrative and technical sources, where they appear under various names.[66] With the help of these descriptions, we are in a position to form a relatively clear picture of what a Byzantine siege tower might look like.

As with other engines used to surmount enemy fortifications, the height of a siege tower was proportionate to the wall it was designed to attack, either equal to it or higher; therefore, only indicative dimensions are given in the sources.[67] The tower was constructed around a framework of four beams rising from the corners of a sturdy rectangular wheeled chassis, held together with iron fastenings.[68] This skeleton was then covered with wooden planks, although an armouring of metal plates could also be used when money was not an issue; the skins of freshly-slaughtered animals were employed as protection against fire.[69] Narrative sources rarely specify the timber used in the construction; the technical treatises, as is to be expected, recommend the use of strong wood, such as palm, and the avoidance of flammable timber (cedar, fir, or alder).[70]

Like their Roman predecessors, Byzantine siege towers were multi-storey affairs, usually with three levels. Men in the lower level were responsible for the tower's forward movement; we are not certain about the method used (either a complex interior mechanism, similar to those in Hellenistic towers, or

66 E.g. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 21.12.9 (*turres ligneae*); Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, ed. Önnerfors, 4.17 (*turres ambulatoriae*); Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 5.21.3 (*πύργοι ξυλίνοι*); *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. Dindorf, p. 720, line 2; p. 725, line 4 (*πυργοκάστελλοι*); Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 670, lines 10-11 (*ξυλόπυργοι*); *Parangelmata Poliorketika*, ed. Sullivan, 2.6 (*ξυλοπύργια φορητά*); *Sylloge taktikon*, ed. A. Dain, *Sylloge tacticorum*, Paris 1938, 53.8 (*μόσυνες*).

67 E.g. Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, ed. Önnerfors, 4.17.2: the dimensions of the base was between 30-50 Roman feet (9-15 m).

68 Zosimus, *Historia nova*, ed. Paschoud, II[1].34.29-35.2; cf. *Miracles of St Demetrius*, ed. Lemerle, p. 219, lines 1-2. Two manuscript illuminations, a Byzantine (Vat. gr. 1164, fol. 99 recto, reproduced in Bradbury, *Medieval Siege*, p. 242) and a 13th-century Spanish (reproduced in Gravett, *Siege Warfare*, p. 17), depict another version, a wooden castle perched upon a single beam rising from the centre of a wheeled chassis. If not an artistic rendering of the *tolenno* (a crane-like device mentioned by Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, ed. Önnerfors, 4.21.6-7), it might lend credibility to the description of a single-beam tower found in a fragment of Priscus, *History*, ed. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*, vol. 2, 6.2.8-17, narrating the siege of Naissus by the Huns (442).

69 Hides: *Miracles of St Demetrius*, ed. Lemerle, p. 219, lines 2-3; Leo VI Tactica, XV 27 ed. Dennis, p. 362, l. 166-167. Iron plates: Pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle*, trans. Trombley/Watt, p. 67.

70 *Parangelmata Poliorketika*, ed. Sullivan, 39.7-12.

simply pushing from behind), but it was clearly effective.[71] The middle platform (or top one, if the tower was level with the enemy wall), was equipped with a drawbridge (*epibathra* or *diabathra*) over which assault troops would storm the battlements, while the top storey was used as a platform for archers and catapults sweeping the wall with missiles in support of the attack.[72]

Byzantine siege towers, however, differed from those of Rome and Late Antiquity in one important detail: they did not seem to have been equipped with rams. This leads us to the second group of siege engines and techniques, those designed to break through an enemy wall. Ever since the early days of siege warfare, such an endeavour was accomplished by a battering ram, a long iron-tipped beam, usually suspended from a wooden frame; imitating the animal from which it was named, the ram ran back and forth, hitting the wall with force, causing cracks in the masonry and eventually a breach.

With regard to data on the Byzantine battering ram (*krios*/*aries*), the situation is comparable to that of the scaling ladder: there are several references to its use, but very little on its construction. In fact, most sources seem to confuse the description of the ram itself with that of the armoured shed that protected it. However, once we have sifted through those descriptions, a somewhat clear picture of the ram *per se* begins to appear.

According to Ammianus, the wooden beam of the ram came from the single trunk of tall and sturdy trees, such as fir (*abies*) or mountain ash (*ornus*).[73] In other words, Ammianus refers to what treatises would call a single-piece (*monoxylos*) battering ram, as opposed to a composite one (*synthetos*), made of a number of smaller pieces of wood.[74] As usual, no set dimensions are mentioned for the length of Byzantine rams. The 10th-century "Heron of Byzantium" refers to a ram 120 cubits (nearly 55 m) long; this was not a contemporary siege engine, however, but a Hellenistic one, the famous ram of Hegetor.[75] A more reasonable length may be deduced from Procopius' description of a Gothic ram used against Rome (537-538), manned by a crew of fifty.[76] Supposing that

71 Certainly more effective than that of the Goths during the siege of Rome (537-38), whose siege towers were pulled by oxen *in front* of the engines, a cause of great mirth to Belisarius – and an excellent target for Byzantine archers (Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 5.22.1-9).

72 Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, ed. Önnerfors, 4.17; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 21.13.9; Zosimus, *Historia nova*, ed. Paschoud, II[1].35.4-6; *Miracles of St Demetrius*, ed. Lemerle, 219, 3-5.

73 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 23.4.8.

74 *Parangelmata Poliorketika*, ed. Sullivan, 2.6 and 21.1-3.

75 Ibid., 25.1-30.

76 Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 5.21.9.

there were 25 soldiers marching on either side of the ram under the armoured shed, each soldier keeping a distance of one metre from the man in front, this particular ram was at least 25 m long – possibly longer, since the two ends of the battering arm tended to protrude beyond the cover. Naturally, these dimensions are only meant to be indicative.

An interesting issue concerns the shape of the battering ram's iron tip. According to Ammianus, it was shaped like the head of the homonymous animal; depictions in Roman art seem to corroborate this.[77] On the other hand, Procopius described the iron-capped front end of the ram as being either square like an anvil or pointed like an arrow tip.[78] Two tentative conclusions may be drawn from this passage: first, the Byzantines had gone back to the classics – literally, since it was highly unusual for Classical (and Hellenistic) battering rams to be shaped like an animal's head; second, by the end of the Early Byzantine period people no longer differentiated between the battering ram and the so-called "drill" (*trypanon*/*terebra*), a Hellenistic/Roman machine similar to the ram, but with a pointed tip designed for use against mudbrick walls.[79]

Another case of going back to the classics was the aforementioned lack of rams in Byzantine siege towers. As opposed to Hellenistic engineers, the Romans preferred to arm their assault towers with rams.[80] However, a comparative study of later written sources makes it clear that by the Middle Byzantine period towers had gone back to their original missions: delivering an assault party onto the enemy wall and providing suppressing fire to cover the attack. Apart from the *argumentum e silentio* that siege towers with battering rams are not mentioned in the sources (a rather weak argument, given the aforementioned paucity of information on siege engines in Middle Byzantine narrative sources), the point is proven by a number of passages from 10th- and 12th-century texts. A list of siege machines for the expedition against the emirate of Crete in 949 included both a siege tower and a number of armoured penthouses; the document clearly indicates that only the penthouses were to

77 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 23.4.8; cf. Campbell, *Greek and Roman Siege Machinery*, pp. 5, 40 (siege scenes from Trajan's Column and the Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome).

78 Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 5.21.8: *ἧς δὴ ὀξεῖαν ποιούμενοι τὴν ἄκραν, σιδήρῳ πολλῷ καθάπερ ἀκίδα καλύπτουσι βέλους, ἢ καὶ τετράγωνον, ὥσπερ ἄκμονα, τὸν σίδηρον ποιοῦσι*.

79 On Hellenistic/Roman drills see Whitehead/Blyth, *Athenaeus Mechanicus, On Machines*, pp. 87-88, 174-75.

80 Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, ed. Önnerfors, 4.17.

be fitted with rams.[81] Equally illuminating are passages from Anna Komnene referring to the sieges of Nicaea by the soldiers of the First Crusade (1097), and of Tyre by Baldwin I (1111-1112). In both instances, Latin sources refer to ram-carrying engines as "siege towers",[82] whereas Anna Komnene persists in calling them "tortoises" (armoured sheds);[83] apparently she believed that only the latter could carry battering rams. Finally, a description of the siege of the Hungarian fortress of Semlin (1165-66) depicts Emperor Manuel I's wish to lead from the front by referring to his eagerness to be the first to ascend the Byzantine siege tower and gain the enemy battlements, probably via a drawbridge; no ram is mentioned.[84]

There is evidence that rams were used solely in conjunction with armoured sheds as early as the 6th century. We have already mentioned the tendency of Byzantine authors to confuse the two. It is Procopius that (though calling it a "ram") provides us with a description of the "tortoise", one of the oldest war machines. Named after its similarity to the amphibious reptile, the engine consisted of a rectangular, flat-top framework of timber covered with fireproof animal hides.[85] Its simplicity, and the fact that this is an eyewitness account by an excellent military historian, led to the conclusion that what we have here is the garden-variety type in use throughout the period in question. This, however, is not the whole story.

Although *chelone*/*testudo* was the generic name for all such armoured sheds,[86] narrative and technical works of CE 400-1200 describe a vast array of types of all shapes and sizes, differing in name, material and purpose. Regarding the latter, apart from *chelonai kriophoroi* (ram-carrying tortoises) there were also armoured sheds providing protection to the men who either filled the moat (*chelonai chostrides*) or undermined the wall (*chelonai oryktrides*).[87] Nor was

81 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 670, lines 10-17, esp. 13: *εἰς μὲν τὰς χελώνας κριοί*. Cf. ibid., p. 671, lines 4-5; p. 673, line 1.

82 Rogers, *Siege Warfare*, 22-23, 79-82.

83 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 324, line 76-p. 325, line 90, esp. p. 324, lines 76-79 (Nicaea); ibid., p. 432, lines 56-57, 60 (Tyre).

84 Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke, p. 241, lines 15-23.

85 Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 5.21.5-11.

86 E.g. Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, ed. Önnerfors, 4.14; *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. Dindorf, p. 719, line 15; *Miracles of St Demetrius*, ed. Lemerle, p. 148, line 28; Nikephoros, *Short History*, ed. C. Mango, *Nicephori archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani Breviarium historicum de rebus gestis post imperium Mauricii* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 13), Washington, D.C. 1990, 13.16; *On Strategy*, ed. Dennis, 12.35; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 670, line 13.

87 *Parangelmata Poliorketika*, ed. Sullivan, 2.1-3.

timber the only material used to construct them. We know from Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman technical manuals – their instructions repeated in "Heron of Byzantium" – that wicker tortoises (*gerrochelonai*) and vine tortoises (*ampelochelonai*/*vineae*) made from plaited tree branches or vine stalks respectively and covered with animal hides were used long before the Early Byzantine period.[88] In the 6th century, Procopius describes similar light machines being used by Byzantium's nomad allies during the siege of Petra in Lazica.[89] His assertion that such devices had never been used before goes against everything we know about plaited tortoises; furthermore, his near contemporaries, Agathias and Menander, describe the *spalion*, an armoured shed also made of interwoven material.[90]

Finally, side by side with other siege methods, or when the latter had failed, the Byzantines resorted to one of the oldest tricks in the book: undermining the wall.[91] Along with the siege mound, mining was one of the most labour-intensive and time-consuming poliorcetic methods, requiring great numbers of workers. Also, like the siege mound, mining operations combined two methods of assault: going under the wall and breaking through it – or at least through its foundations.

The various techniques are described in narrative sources[92] and neatly summarized in the 9th- or 10th-century work of Syrianos.[93] Two options were open to the attackers: they could either start digging from a distance, tunnelling their way through or under the foundations, or they would advance in the open, protected by armoured sheds, all the way to the foot of the enemy curtain wall or tower, where they would proceed to dig through the masonry. In order to prevent the edifice from collapsing on top of them, they would shore it with pine logs or other dry timber, often coated with flammable substances (tar, resin, oil etc.). When the time was right, the workers set fire to the timber and evacuated, leaving the mine to collapse. Whether tunnelling under the

88 Lendle, *Texte und Untersuchungen*, pp. 136-41.

89 Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 8.11.27-31.

90 Agathias, *Historiae*, ed. Keydell, p. 89, line 28-p. 90, line 5; Menander Protector, *History*, ed. Blockley, 40. Maurice, *Strategikon*, ed. Dennis, 10.3.13, calls them *παλλίωνες*.

91 Maurice, *Strategikon*, ed. Dennis, 10.1.55 (*διορυγή*); Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 2.14.20 (*κατώρυχα*), 2.17.17 (*διώρυχα*); Nikephoros Ouranos, *Taktika*, ed. McGeer, 65.145 (*τὸ διὰ τῶν θεμελίων ὄρυγμα*); Menander Protector, *History*, ed. Blockley, 23.7.3 (*ὑπόνομος*).

92 E.g. Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 2.17.17-24; Agathias, *Historiae*, ed. Keydell, p. 21, line 15-p. 22, line 25; Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, ed. Hase, p. 25, lines 17-26, 8; Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 463, lines 70-80.

93 *On Strategy*, ed. Dennis, 13.5-19.

foundations or sapping the masonry, the besiegers had one goal: to bring down part of the wall, opening the way for a storming party to enter the city.

3 The Technology: Projectile-Throwing Engines

For offensive operations against a fortified place to be successful, an array of machines such as the ones described above is not enough, unless sufficient firepower is available to support the assault. Since the 4th century BC, such firepower had mainly come in the form of arrow-shooting and stone-throwing machines, known to the ancients as catapults.[94] The Byzantines drew heavily on this legacy, while at the same time they were quick to adopt new types coming from a completely different cultural and technological milieu. The result was an inventory of highly effective ballistic engines that were present at almost every siege between the 4th and the 12th century.

The Byzantines' main catapult during the early period was the *ballistra*/*ballista*, developed in the 1st century CE.[95] Compared to older types, the arrow-shooting *ballista* incorporated a number of improvements; key among them was the replacement of the wooden frame holding the torsion springs by two all-metal ones connected to each other and to the stock by metal struts, the upper one sporting an arch (*kamarion*) that became the machine's most distinctive feature.[96] The fact that the arrow-shooting *ballista* saw service throughout the Early Byzantine period is confirmed by numerous references in Greek and Latin sources, including four more or less detailed descriptions of the machine.[97]

Unfortunately, these descriptions have proved to be controversial,[98] leading researchers into developing a number of competing theories regarding the

94 Marsden, *Historical Development* is dated, but still useful as an introduction to the subject.

95 After decades of being considered as a fictional thing, the arrow-shooting *ballista* was proven to be an actual Roman machine: Marsden, ibid., pp. 188-89 (analysis of date and reasons behind the term *ballista* being used for the new type of arrow-shooter) and id., *Technical Treatises*, pp. 206-48 (description based on a pre-Byzantine text attributed, probably erroneously, to Heron of Alexandria).

96 For Byzantine manuscript illuminations depicting *ballista* components similar to those unearthed in Romania, see Baatz, "Recent Finds", pp. 12-15 and pl. II, V.

97 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 23.4.1-3; Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, ed. Önnerfors, 4.22; *De rebus bellicis*, ed. Ireland, pp. 8-9 and 17; Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 5.21.14-18.

98 Especially Latin ones; attempts to make sense of them: Brok, "Bombast oder Kunstfertigkeit?"; Den Hengst, "Preparing the Reader for War", pp. 30-31; Hassall, "The Inventions".

proper reconstruction of a *ballistra*. Apart from those who follow Marsden's analysis (as modified by later finds),[99] three more schools of thought have appeared. One claims that most arrow-shooting *ballistae* were hand-held weapons;[100] another holds that the machine's arms swung inwards rather than outwards as older catapults' arms did.[101] Finally, some believe that by the 6th century the Byzantines were either unwilling or unable to construct torsion machines.[102]

With regard to the first two theories, some proof against them may be found in Byzantine sources.[103] But it is the third theory that is really left without a leg upon which to stand, following a closer look into Procopius' description of the slider (the moving part of the stock that holds the bolt and engages the bowstring) in relation to the "bow-shaped component". Apart from the fact that earlier scholars had mistaken the latter (obviously the *kamarion*) for a metal bow,[104] they overlooked one important detail: the slider moves *below* it, not above it as would be the case if Procopius' *ballistra* were a tension machine.[105]

99 Marsden's description was modified after the first archaeological finds came to light, leading to far more satisfactory reconstructions of the *βαλλίστρα*: see Wilkins, "Reconstructing the *cheiroballistra*", and Wilkins/Morgan, "*Scorpio* and *cheiroballistra*".

100 The theory's main proponent is Baatz, "Recent Finds", pp. 14-16; Gudea/Baatz, "Teile spätrömischer Ballisten", p. 61. See also Iriarte, "Pseudo-Heron's *cheiroballistra*".

101 Iriarte, "The Inswinging Theory".

102 Chevedden, "Artillery in Late Antiquity".

103 If Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 5.21.14-18 does describe a torsion engine, his wording would suggest arms which swing outwards, much like those of ancient machines. There is more evidence against the *ballista* being a hand-held weapon. To begin with, crossbows seem to have been unknown in Byzantium prior to the 11th century, *pace* Haldon, "ΣΩΛΗΝΑΡΙΟΝ" (refuted by Nishimura, "Crossbows"). Also, the attempt of Campbell, "Auxiliary Artillery Revisited", pp. 131-32, and Pétrin, "Philological Notes on the Crossbow", esp. pp. 265-68, to argue that the *ballistarii* escorting Julian in Gaul along with heavy cavalry (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 16.2.5) were mounted crossbowmen fails to take into consideration Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravcsik, 53.1-161, where *ballistarii* use carriage-mounted engines (*carroballistae*). Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 5.22.21, relates how the arrow-shooting *ballista* could not be depressed sufficiently so as to fire at the foot of a wall (suggesting it was base-mounted), while Agathias, *Historiae*, ed. Keydell, p. 111, lines 16-23, implies that it was a crew-served weapon.

104 Richmond, *Trajan's Army on Trajan's Column*, pp. 16-17.

105 Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 5.21.14: *ἔνερθέν τε αὐτοῦ*. A similar arrangement is described in *De rebus bellicis*, ed. Ireland, p. 17, where the *arcus ferreus* (i.e. the *kamarion*, also mistaken for a metal bow: cf. Oliver, "A Note on the *De Rebus Bellicis*") is described as being *above* the slider ("*supra canalem*").

This, in conjunction with other evidence, shows that the Byzantines knew how to make torsion springs well into the 6th century.

If the arrow-shooting torsion *ballista* was still used by the Byzantines in the 6th century, there is no reason to assume that it would have fallen out of use during the first half of the Middle Byzantine period, as its superior accuracy and hitting power made it indispensable.[106] The survival of the term itself in post-Procopian sources clearly supports the view that metal-framed torsion machines continued to be used,[107] as does a reference in pseudo-Heron to torsion springs made of silk, a practice not mentioned in his sources and clearly dated after the mid-6th century, when Byzantine industry would have been able to produce sufficient amounts of silk rope to cover military needs.[108]

Much has been made of the term *toxoballistra* (or *toxobolistra*) found in Middle Byzantine sources and used as evidence for the existence of tension arrow-shooters, in effect base-mounted crossbows.[109] True, this term might remind one of a crossbow (cf. Fr. *arbaleste* or *arbalète*, deriving from Lat. *arcuballista*),[110] but the lack of evidence for Byzantine crossbows before the 11th century is also suggestive.[111] Furthermore, we must take into consideration

106 Accuracy: Zosimus, *Historia nova*, ed. Paschoud, I.60.20-61.14; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 19.1.1-2.1. Hitting power: Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 19.5.6; Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 5.23.9-12. For a Byzantine author singing its praises, see Urbicius, *Epitedeuma*, ed. G. Greatrex/H. Elton/R. Burgess, "Urbicius' *Epitedeuma*: An Edition, Translation and Commentary", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 98 (2005) 35-74, lines 80-83: *ἡ γὰρ Ἀρχιμήδους βοηθήσει τέχνη τοῖς στρατεύμασιν· ἡ τὰς βαλλίστρας τεχνησαμένη τὸ ἀκαταμάχητον ὅπλον καὶ οὐκ ἀσχολήσει τηλικοῦτον ὅπλον οἷον οὐδὲν ἄλλο παρὰ τῆς σοφῆς τέχνης ἐπινενόηται*.

107 Maurice, *Strategikon*, ed. Dennis, 12B.6.8-9 and 21.13; cf. the use of the term in a Maronite chronicle (trans. A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syriac Chronicles*, Liverpool 1993, p. 33), and in a 7th- or 8th-century medical text (ed. F.R. Dietz, *Scholia in Hippocratem et Galenum*, Königsberg 1834, vol. 2, p. 384).

108 *Parangelmata Poliorketika*, ed. Sullivan, 44.31-35; cf. Sullivan, *Siegecraft*, pp. 223-24. On silk production, see Muthesius, "Essential Processes".

109 E.g. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, p. 384, lines 11-12; Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bekker, p. 298, line 16; Leo VI Tactica, VI 23, ed. Dennis, p. 94, l. 149. Cf. Chevedden, "Artillery in Late Antiquity", pp. 146-51, 163-64.

110 Huuri, *Geschichte des mittelalterlichen Geschützwesens*, pp. 43-47. Hall, "Crossbows and Crosswords", p. 532, suggested that even the *arcuballista* might be a torsion type (*arcus* referring to the *καμάριον*).

111 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 305, lines 71-72, is adamant: *ἡ δὲ τζάγρα τόξον μέν ἐστι βαρβαρικὸν καὶ Ἕλλησι παντελῶς ἀγνοούμενον*; cf. later references to the crossbow as "the Latin bow" in Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, pp. 331-32.

the parallel use of the term *ēlakatē* ("distaff") and its derivatives.[112] It has been suggested that the term might describe either the ropes of a traction trebuchet or the windlass of a base-mounted crossbow;[113] combined with other evidence already mentioned, however, it seems to indicate that engines with torsion springs resembling bundles of yarn were probably still in use in the 9th and 10th centuries.[114] Only in the late 11th century does a Greek source specifically refer to Western crossbows (*tzangrai*).[115] After that, however, the transformation was rapid: by the end of the 12th century, Byzantium had adopted the base-mounted crossbow as its sole bolt-shooter.[116]

The twists and turns of the history of Byzantine military technology are also evident in the evolution of stone-throwing engines. Until the 1st century CE the principal stone-thrower had been the *ballista*, a two-arm torsion catapult. At some later point, however, it was replaced by a one-arm machine similar to the *monangon* mentioned in Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman technical manuals.[117] We are not sure exactly when this change took place; what we do know is that by the 4th century and throughout the Early Byzantine period the army was equipped exclusively with this engine, the *onagros*/*onager*.[118]

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112 Cf. Huuri, *Geschichte des mittelalterlichen Geschützwesens*, pp. 85-87. References: *De obsidione toleranda*, ed. Van den Berg, p. 48, lines 3-4, and p. 56, lines 8-9 (quoted below, n. 132); *Praecepta militaria*, ed. McGeer, 1.151 (*ἠλακάτια*). The only source describing the *alakation* as a stone-thrower is Leo VI Tactica, XV 26, ed. Dennis, p. 362, l. 156-57 (*διὰ τῶν πετροβόλων μαγγανικῶν τῶν λεγομένων ἀλακατίων ἢ τετραρέων*). However, in another passage (6.150: *καὶ βαλίστρας ἤτοι μαγγανικά, τὰ λεγόμενα ἀλακάτια*) he identifies it with the (arrow-shooting) *ballista*; this is based on Maurice, *Strategikon*, ed. Dennis/Gamillscheg, 12B.6.8-9 (*ἀμάξας ἐχούσας βαλλίστρας ἑκατέρωθεν στρεφομένας*), a clear reference to *carroballistae* (*pace* Dennis, "Byzantine Heavy Artillery", pp. 99-101).

113 Traction trebuchet: see below, n. 134; windlass: Sullivan, "Offensive Siege Warfare", p. 199.

114 Of particular interest is the fact that Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 669, line 21-p. 670, line 1, p. 670, lines 11-12, p. 671, lines 15-16 also mentions silk cords (cf. above, n. 108) in conjunction with arrow-shooters; cf. Sullivan, "Offensive Siege Warfare", pp. 198-99.

115 Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Litavrin, p. 194, line 18; they are mentioned alongside *μαγγανικά*, a generic term for ballistic engines (cf. Huuri, *Geschichte des mittelalterlichen Geschützwesens*, pp. 82-83).

116 A 14th-century vernacular edition of Choniates' work (*Choniates' Paraphrase*, ed. Davis, p. 118, line 17) calls this weapon *μαγγανότζαγκρα*. Medieval weapons of the type are depicted in Gravett, *Siege Warfare*, p. 20, and Bradbury, *Medieval Siege*, p. 250. For Byzantine crossbows in general, see Kolias, *Byzantinische Waffen*, pp. 239-53.

117 Marsden, *Historical Development*, pp. 188-98; Wilkins, *Roman Artillery*, pp. 66-69.

118 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 23.4.4; 31.15.12; Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, ed. Önnerfors, 4.22; John Lydus, *On the Magistracies of the Roman State*, ed. A. Bandy,

Sadly, no contemporary artistic representation has survived; what little we know about the *onager*'s appearance comes from Ammianus Marcellinus' eyewitness description – and its modern interpretations.[119] It consisted of a sturdy rectangular timber frame. A bundle of sinew cords passing through holes in the middle of the side beams constituted the engine's sole torsion spring; inserted in it was a wooden arm, with a sling hanging at the other end. A rounded stone was loaded onto the sling and the arm winched down; when released, it travelled forward at a great speed until it hit the buffer (a sack of fine chaff), at which point the sling flew open, launching the stone.[120]

In the absence of pictorial data, some of the engine's technical aspects must remain obscure. For instance, it would have been useful to know the exact position of the buffer, especially its angle from the horizontal – one of the key factors determining the *onager*'s performance.[121] However, there is sufficient circumstantial evidence to indicate that, though more cumbersome, one-arm stone-throwers were as effective as older *ballistae*.[122]

The *onager* served until the early 7th century. By then, yet another type of stone-thrower had been introduced, one that differed greatly from Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman engines, both in appearance and in mechanical principles. In fact, the old *ballista* and *onager* and the new stone-thrower were worlds

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De magistratibus populi Romani, Philadelphia 1983, p. 72, lines 23-24; Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 5.21.19; *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. Dindorf, p. 537, line 17. Another term is *scorpio*, used only by Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 18.2.7; 20.7.10; 23.4.4.

119 The description is analysed in Marsden, *Technical Treatises*, pp. 249-65. For a more recent treatment, see Cherretté, "The onager according to Ammianus Marcellinus".

120 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 23.4.4-7.

121 Earlier reconstructions set the buffer at angles of 75° or 90°; cf. Wilkins, *Roman Artillery*, p. 67, photo 53. Hart/Lewis, "Mechanics of the Onager", pp. 346, 358-60, analysed the *onager*'s technical characteristics through a mathematical model and concluded that the most effective angle for the buffer would be 135°. Another recently revived theory has the buffer separate from the *onager* proper: Campbell, "Ancient Catapults", pp. 690-92.

122 Cumbersome and more difficult to aim: Marsden, *Technical Treatises*, pp. 263-65 (but cf. ibid., p. 254, for the *onager*'s advantages over the older type); equal in performance to the two-arm *ballista*: Wilkins, *Roman Artillery*, pp. 66, 68-69. Archaeological finds from Cremna show that Late Roman *onagri* could throw a missile weighing 26 kg and had an effective range of 150 m (Mitchell, *Cremna in Pisidia*, pp. 183-84, 194-95), while Julian, *Orations*, ed. W.C. Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, vol. 1, New York 1913, 63A, claims that contemporary stone-throwers could handle shot as heavy as "seven Attic talents" (182 kg). An incident from the Persian siege of Theodosioupolis-Resaina in 421 (Theodoret, *Church History*, ed. L. Parmentier, *Theodoret Kirchengeschichte*, Leipzig 1911, p. 340, line 22-p. 341, line 20) alludes to the accuracy of the city's stone-thrower (presumably an *onager*).

apart: the traction trebuchet (as it is known to modern researchers) had been invented in China. Due to the problems regarding its provenance, mode of diffusion, and date of adoption, it is one of the most rigorously studied Byzantine siege machines. Still, a number of key issues remain controversial.

Chinese sources describe the stone-throwing engine in question as a wooden beam resting on a pole or trestle – essentially a large lever on a fulcrum. At the rear end of the beam was a sling that received the stone; a group of soldiers would pull on ropes hanging at the front of the beam, thus causing the other end to fly upwards and the sling to release the projectile.[123] It was an engine of this type that caught the eye of John, future archbishop of Thessaloniki and author of the first part of the *Miracles of St Demetrius*, our only source for the Avar siege of the city in 586.[124] The passage in question shows that it was through the Avars that Eastern Rome came to know this Chinese engine at the end of the 6th century;[125] by the early 600s, the traction trebuchet had been adopted as the main Byzantine stone-thrower and was beginning to find its way into the arsenals of neighbouring powers as well.[126]

It was probably the simpler construction and superior performance of the new type that ultimately led to its adoption: replacing the mechanical

123 Needham, "China's Trebuchets"; cf. Hill, "Trebuchets", esp. pp. 106-08, for trebuchet mechanics.

124 *Miracles of St Demetrius*, ed. Lemerle, p. 154, lines 6-22. The detailed description of the engine (clearly deriving from personal observation) is one of the main arguments in favour of the authenticity of the text.

125 Howard-Johnston, "Thema", p. 193 and n. 11, was the first to propose an Avar (and ultimately Chinese) origin for the Byzantine traction trebuchet; cf. id., "The Siege of Constantinople in 626", p. 138; he was followed by McCotter, *Siege Warfare*, pp. 128, 212-13, and Whitby, "Siege Warfare", pp. 449-53. On the other hand, Chevedden, "The Invention of the Counterweight Trebuchet", pp. 74-75, insists that it was the Byzantines who introduced the traction trebuchet to the Avars. Proponents of the latter thesis seek support from Simokattes, *Historia*, ed. De Boor/Wirth, pp. 101-03, describing the vicissitudes of Bousas, a Byzantine soldier who taught the Avars how to construct siege engines. The story is taken at face value by Vryonis, "The Evolution of Slavic Society", in an effort to prove that the first Avar siege of Thessaloniki took place in 597. Unfortunately, his contribution, meant to clarify the issue, has managed to obfuscate it; cf. the remarks of Kardaras, "The Episode of Bousas".

126 Based on the assumption that Bousas introduced the traction stone-thrower to the Avars, Dennis, "Byzantine Heavy Artillery", pp. 99-101, sees "evidence" for trebuchets in Maurice and Theophylaktos Simokattes. Petersen, *Siege Warfare*, pp. 406-29, takes this faulty reasoning one impossible step further (or rather backwards), claiming that they might have been introduced to Byzantium as early as the late 4th century CE. Older theories regarding the diffusion of the trebuchet are summarized in Rogers, *Siege Warfare*, pp. 254-73.

sophistication of an *onager*'s elaborate torsion spring with a pulling crew's cheap labour,[127] while at the same time being able to use much heavier projectiles – as heavy as a live ass, if poetry is to be believed.[128] Given our past experience with contemporary sources it should come as no surprise that a complete consensus on the various types has yet to be reached amongst leading experts. The terminology used by most Greek sources, narrative or otherwise, to denote stone-throwing machines is rather vague; attempts by some scholars to provide a more specific meaning remain less than convincing.[129] The latter have also posited the existence of some "hybrid" form of trebuchet (a traction machine utilizing aspects of the later counterweight principle),

127 On the advantages of the new type, see Chevedden, "The Artillery of King James I", pp. 54-56. True to form, Byzantine sources are silent on the question of the number of pullers. Oriental texts, on the other hand, provide some interesting data (tabulated in Chevedden et al., "The Traction Trebuchet", p. 444): e.g. Balādhuri, *Book of Conquests*, trans. Ph.Kh. Hitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, New York 1916-1924, vol. 2, p. 217 (500 men); Aristakes, *History*, trans. Bedrosian, p. 103: "Then they readied another military device which they themselves called *baban* – a very frightful thing, which, it was said, required four hundred attendants to pull ropes". For Chinese trebuchets with 125 ropes, each pulled by two men, see Needham, "China's Trebuchets", pp. 112-13. Huuri, *Geschichte des mittelalterlichen Geschützwesens*, p. 14, thought the numbers fantastic; Needham (ibid., p. 121, n. 45) was of the opinion that such large crews, if they existed at all, probably worked in relays. The validity of the figures given in the sources is defended by Chevedden et al., "The Traction Trebuchet", pp. 443-55; yet the experimental reconstruction of a trebuchet (Tarver, "The Traction Trebuchet", pp. 157-59) has demonstrated that even a mere 20-25 men pulling on the ropes are sufficient to lift the operator off his feet.

128 The donkey-launching incident (Theodosios Diakonos, *Sack of Crete*, ed. Criscuolo, lines 716-26) is the closest thing we have to a mention of payload weight in a Greek text. Huuri, *Geschichte des mittelalterlichen Geschützwesens*, pp. 90-91, estimates the unfortunate beast's weight as approximately 120-200 kg (though it could have been lower, depending on age and size). For loads in Oriental sources, see Chevedden et al., "The Traction Trebuchet", pp. 439-43, esp. p. 442, Table 1: they range from 50 to 200 kg, but, except for one or two explicit statements (e.g. the balls used by a Byzantine trebuchet in 1071 are said to have weighed 96 kg), most figures are either estimates or simply exaggerated conjectures. One is left with the impression that Chevedden's main goal is to promote the notion of "hybrid" trebuchets capable of delivering huge projectiles.

129 Chevedden, "The Artillery of King James I", pp. 57-58, n. 25, proposes to identify Anna Komnene's *petroboloi* ("rock-throwers") and *lithoboloi* ("stone-throwers") with heavy and light trebuchets, respectively; cf. ibid., pp. 64-65, for Maurice's supposed use of the terms *manganon* (pole-framed trebuchet) and *petrobolos* (trestle-framed trebuchet). Dennis, "Byzantine Heavy Artillery", pp. 108-09, also attributes specific meanings to Anna Komnene's terminology: *lithobolos* denotes a pole-framed machine, *petrobolos* a trestle-framed trebuchet, and *helepolis* is the "hybrid" trebuchet.

but doubts have been raised about this theory as well.[130] Our best evidence by far comes from the documents describing the Cretan expedition of 949, which identify three types: *tetrarea*, *labdarea*, and *manganikon*.[131] The first two terms clearly describe lever artillery mounted on four-legged[132] and "*lambda*-shaped" frames, respectively.[133] With regard to the *manganikon*, it is thought to

130 Chevedden, "The Hybrid Trebuchet", with a brief overview in Chevedden et al., "The Traction Trebuchet", pp. 441-44. Chevedden bases his arguments on the assumption that only a stone-thrower combining traction with gravity would have been capable of handling the immensely heavy projectiles he believes were used from the 9th century onwards (see above, n. 128); he further conjectures that the terms *baban* and *manjanīq kabīr* – i.e. "large (stone-thrower)" in Armenian and Arabic, respectively – referred to the hybrid trebuchet; e.g. Aristakes, *History*, trans. Bedrosian, p. 103 (quoted above, n. 127); Matthew of Edessa, *Chronicle*, trans. A. Dostourian, *Armenia and the Crusades, Tenth to Twelfth Centuries: The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, Lanham 1993, p. 87. Dennis, "Byzantine Heavy Artillery", 108-09, also accepts the existence of hybrid trebuchets. Basista, "Hybrid or Counterpoise?", expresses scepticism; cf. Tarver, "The Traction Trebuchet", p. 156, n. 70.

131 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 672, line 16: *Ὑπὲρ ἐξοπλίσεως τετραραίων δ΄, λαβδαρέων δ΄, μαγγανικῶν δ΄*.

132 On the identification of the *tetrarea* with the trestle-framed trebuchet, see Petersen, *Siege Warfare*, pp. 410, 417-418. Similar types, called *Ssu-Chiao* ("four-footed"), are described in Chinese sources: Needham, "China's Trebuchets", pp. 109, 112-13, 133. The term is fairly common in Middle Byzantine texts: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, p. 384, lines 11-12: *στήσας τοξοβολίστρας καὶ τετραρέας εἰς τοὺς πύργους καὶ μαγγανικά*; Leo VI Tactica, XV 26 ed. Dennis, p. 362, l. 156-57 (quoted above, n. 112); *De obsidione toleranda*, ed. Van den Berg, p. 48, lines 3-4 (*τετραρέας, μαγγανικὰ καὶ τὰς λεγομένας ἡλακάτας*) and p. 56, lines 8-9 (*πέμπειν δὲ καὶ διὰ τῶν τετραρίων καὶ τῶν μαγγανικῶν καὶ τῶν λεκατῶν*). The "four-legged *helepoleis*" mentioned in Joseph Genesios, *On reigns*, ed. A. Lesmüller-Werner/I. Thurn, *Iosephi Genesii Regum libri quattuor* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 14), Berlin 1978, p. 28, lines 60-62 (*τετρασκελεῖς ἑλεπόλεις κατασκευάσας καὶ ἐκ τῶν πεμπομένων δι' αὐτῶν ἀπὸ τῶν νεῶν λίθων κατασείειν τὸ τεῖχος οἰόμενος*) are in all probability the same type. For another possible reference, see *Scriptor incertus*, ed. Bekker, p. 347, lines 15-16: *καὶ μαγγανικὰ παμμεγέστατα, τριβόλους τε καὶ τετραβόλους*; cf. Haldon, "Theory and Practice", pp. 273-74.

133 The *λαβδαρέα* obviously owed its name to the engine resembling the Greek letter Λ/λ (*pace* Huuri, *Geschichte des mittelalterlichen Geschützwesens*, p. 87, who derived the term from *lapidaria*). However, the exact nature of this resemblance remains unclear. Chevedden, "The Artillery of King James I", pp. 66-67, identifies it with the *hu dun pao* ("crouching tiger trebuchet"), a Chinese version with trusses forming an uncial *lambda* (for a depiction, see Chevedden et al., "The Traction Trebuchet", p. 475, Fig. 15); a similar type (the "Persian/Turkish *manjanīq*") is described by Ṭarsūsī, *Manual*, trans. Cahen, pp. 141-42 (depicted in Chevedden et al., ibid., p. 481, Fig. 21). On the other hand, Haldon, "Theory and Practice", pp. 274-75, based on the mention of *triboloi* alongside *tetraboloi* in *Scriptor incertus*, ed. Bekker, p. 347, lines 15-16 (quoted above, n. 132), believes that the *labdarea* was a three-legged type. The key lies in interpreting the only other mention of the term:

refer to the pole-framed trebuchet – incidentally the only type depicted in the Madrid Skylitzes.[134]

The traction trebuchet remained Byzantium's main stone-thrower until at least the 12th century. By the 13th century, however, it had begun to be supplanted in the West by an improved, counterweight version.[135] The replacement of traction by gravity is thought to have taken place in Italy in the late 12th century.[136] In recent years an alternative theory has gained currency, claiming that the counterweight trebuchet might have been invented in Byzantium.[137] The argument revolves around the interpretation of a passage describing an engine operated by Andronikos Komnenos during the siege of Semlin; according to Chevedden, the description implies that the machine was a counterweight

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Leo VI Tactica, XI 22, ed. Dennis, p. 204, l. 128-42, describing an anti-cavalry device consisting of three lengths of wood (see also Nikephoros Ouranos, *Taktika*, ed. McGeer, 65.69-70: *τρισκέλια μετὰ τζιπάτων*; cf. McGeer, "Tradition and Reality", pp. 134-35), and whether the term *labdarea* in that passage refers to the entire tripod or to two beams lashed together Λ-fashion to support a third. Both theories have merit, but the engine's Chinese pedigree makes me lean slightly towards Chevedden.

134 Chevedden, "The Artillery of King James I", pp. 65-66. This, however, is far from certain. For one thing, the documents also use *μαγγανικόν* as a generic term for stone-throwers: Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 670, lines 13-14, and p. 670, line 18-p. 671, line 2 (*διὰ τῆς ἐξοπλίσεως τῶν μαγγανικῶν ἐξόπλισις τετραρέων δ΄, λαβδαρέων δ΄, εἱλακτιῶν δ΄*). Another complication arising from the passage just quoted is that it seems to conflate *manganikon* and *ēlakatē*/*alakation* – indeed, Chevedden based his identification on the pole-framed trebuchet resembling a distaff. However, with the exception of Leo VI Tactica, XV 26, ed. Dennis, p. 362, l. 156-57 (quoted above, n. 112), Byzantine sources mentioning *manganika* and *alakatia* clearly differentiate between the two (see references above, n. 132). Since Leo is unclear on whether his engine is arrow-shooting or stone-throwing (see above, n. 112), Haldon, "Theory and Practice", pp. 275-77, has identified the *manganika* (*alakatia*) with base-mounted crossbows adapted for shooting stones; but Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 670, line 15, and 673, line 6, prescribes slings for these engines, clearly marking them as one-arm stone-throwers. Given the aforementioned link between the term *ēlakatē* and torsion technology, as well as evidence for the survival of the latter into the 10th century, one could argue that the *manganika alakatia* represented a fossilized version of the old *onager* (cf. Sullivan, "Offensive Siege Warfare", pp. 198-99); however, no concrete evidence supports the outdated theory that *onagri* had continued to serve in the Middle Ages (cf. Purton, "The myth of the mangonel"). For pole-framed trebuchets in the Madrid Skylitzes, see Hoffmeyer, *Military Equipment*, pp. 129-37.

135 Rogers, *Siege Warfare*, pp. 267-68.

136 White, "The Crusades and the Technological Thrust of the West", p. 102.

137 Chevedden, "The Invention of the Counterweight Trebuchet".

trebuchet.[138] Other scholars have placed the invention at an even earlier date, but this seems far-fetched.[139] As for Choniates, his phrasing is rather vague and the aforementioned interpretation runs contrary to what little evidence we possess on 12th-century engines.[140] Taking into consideration the Italian etymology of many Late Byzantine terms for artillery, it seems more reasonable to assume that counterweight trebuchets had entered Byzantium from the West.[141] Elements of the old terminology continued to survive: after a 400-year hiatus, the vernacular version of Choniates records the final appearance of the term *tetrarea*,[142] a sad reminder of the glory that was Byzantine siegecraft.

4 Byzantine Siegecraft from Theory to Practice

A quick glance at the footnotes of the preceding two chapters will reveal that, as heavily as a theoretical description of Byzantine siege engines and artillery must rely on technical texts, it is still possible to expand upon it with a few passages from narrative sources. This raises the question: to what degree were the precepts of ancient poliorcetic science mirrored in Early Medieval reality? Anyone studying the art of recapture as practiced by Byzantium must always keep this question in mind; indeed, a number of specialists have approached Byzantine siegecraft almost exclusively from the point of view of "theory vs. practice".[143] However, though their methods and conclusions have been

138 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. Van Dieten, p. p. 134, lines 79-81; Chevedden, "The Invention of the Counterweight Trebuchet", p. 86.

139 Early 12th century: Dennis, "Byzantine Heavy Artillery", pp. 112-14; mid-10th century: Haldon, "Theory and Practice", p. 274. For 11th- and 12th-century references to pulling crews, see Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. É. Renauld, *Chronographie ou histoire d'un siècle de Byzance* (*976-1077*), vol. 2, Paris 1928, p. 118, lines 4-5, and Theodore Prodromos, *Poems*, ed. W. *Hörandner*, *Theodoros Prodromos: historische Gedichte*, Vienna 1974, p. 239.

140 Eustathios, *Sack of Thessaloniki*, ed. S.P. Kyriakides, *Eustazio di Tessalonica, La espugnazione di Tessalonica*, Palermo 1961, p. 74, lines 29-31: Byzantine stone-throwers defending Thessaloniki in 1185 were inferior in size and performance to those of the Norman attackers.

141 *Choniates' Paraphrase*, ed. Davis, p. 90, lines 16-18; cf. ibid., p. 90, lines 7-8. The term *πρέκουλα* mentioned in them derives from *bricola*, a pole-framed gravity-powered engine with two counterweights (depicted in Chevedden, "The Invention of the Counterweight Trebuchet", p. 74, Fig. 5).

142 *Choniates' Paraphrase*, ed. Davis, p. 123, line 6.

143 McGeer, "Byzantine Siege Warfare in Theory and Practice"; Sullivan, "Offensive Siege Warfare"; id., "Byzantium Besieged: Prescription and Practice".

invaluable, and in the remaining paragraphs we propose to follow their example, perhaps a caveat or two will not go amiss here.

It has already been pointed out, in the excursus on sources, that works of historiography are sometimes either untrustworthy or less than informative when it comes to the description of applied siege techniques and methods. If this makes matters difficult for modern historians who attempt a comparison between principles of Byzantine siegecraft and their practical applications, things are not much better at the theoretical end of the spectrum. Apart from having their credibility questioned on account of *mimesis*, poliorcetic manuals are often equally uninformative. A characteristic example is the complete lack of technical descriptions of Byzantine stone-throwers: apart from a few titbits in Vegetius and the *Parangelmata Poliorketika*, no details regarding the *onager* are contained in Byzantine manuals, while descriptions of the traction trebuchet, Byzantium's main stone-thrower for more than five centuries, are absent from contemporary Greek technical texts – though not from Arabic ones.[144] An equally telling example is the case of the long-distance blockade (on which see more below): although much favoured by the armies of the Macedonian dynasty, a detailed description of this method or instructions on how it should be applied are almost nowhere to be found in the corpus of 10th-century Byzantine military manuals.[145]

Let us now address the question of the survival of Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman siege machines and methods into the Late Roman and Early Medieval periods, keeping in mind that any answer must be prefixed with the aforementioned peculiarities of our written sources in their fragmentary state of preservation; in other words, the evidence will have to be analysed in a less-than-detailed fashion.

A macroscopic analysis of the information scattered in the source material will show that, by and large, Byzantine siegecraft, much like the empire itself, was a continuation of its Graeco-Roman past, tracing a line that leads from the

144 On Arabic technical treatises describing trebuchets, see Chevedden, "The Artillery of King James I", p. 57, n. 23; Chevedden seems to believe that Byzantine manuals on the construction of traction trebuchets might have existed by the middle of the 10th century (ibid., n. 25), but this is based on his (and others') misinterpretation of the term *helepolis* as used by Byzantine authors (cf. above, n. 129).

145 A possible exception is *Campaign Organization and Tactics*, ed. Dennis, 21, which stipulates that continuous raids be mounted against an enemy city's environs, so that its inhabitants would be forced by the threat of starvation to become fugitives; however, the author fails to mention one of the key elements of 10th-century long-distance blockade: the use of a fortified base for raiders. Cf. Howard-Johnston, *Studies in the Organization of the Byzantine Army*, pp. 244-49.

4th to the 6th to the 10th century and beyond. This conclusion is based on a comparison of narrative sources from the Early Byzantine period with information culled from some of the best first-hand descriptions of Middle Byzantine expeditionary forces. Taking as indicators the presence of arrow-shooting and stone-throwing artillery,[146] siege towers,[147] armoured sheds equipped with rams,[148] siege mounds,[149] and mining,[150] what we see emerging is a picture of continuity: every one of these engines, techniques and methods was still in use throughout the Byzantine period, centuries after their first appearance in Greece, Rome, or the East.

Furthermore, scraps of information in narrative sources might reveal additional traces of continuity. For instance, Choniates' description of a Byzantine assault ladder mounted on ships during the siege of Kerkyra (1148-49)[151] is very similar to the *sambuca* mentioned in pseudo-Heron.[152] Another case in point is the survival of field artillery (regularly employed during Roman times)[153] well into the Middle Byzantine period. We have already mentioned the exis-

146 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 20.7.10; 23.4.1-7; 31.15.12; Zosimus, *Historia nova*, ed. Paschoud, II[1].39.5-16; Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 5.21.14-19; Agathias, *Historiae*, ed. Keydell, p. 117, lines 11-17; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 670, lines 10-13; p. 670, line 18-p. 671, line 2; p. 672, line 16-p. 673, line 3.

147 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 21.12-13; 23.4-8; 24.18-21; Zosimus, *Historia nova*, ed. Paschoud, II[1].34.26-35.11; Pseudo-Zachariah, *Chronicle*, trans. Hamilton/Brooks, p. 160; Vasiliev, *Byzance*, p. 150 (Ibn al-Athīr referring to the use of siege towers by the Byzantines in 927); Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 670, lines 10-11; Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke, p. 241, lines 17-21.

148 Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 5.21.5-11; Menander Protector, *History*, ed. Blockley, 23.7.1-3; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, p. 379, 17-25; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 670, line 11; p. 670, line 13; p. 671, lines 4-5; p. 673, line 1. Several references to *χελῶναι* are found in Theodosios Diakonos, *Sack of Crete*, ed. Criscuolo (e.g. lines 309-12 and 696-98), although these may be classical allusions. For a 12th-century reference, see Choniates, *Historia*, ed. Van Dieten, p. 282, lines 75-86.

149 For references to siege mounds, see above, nn. 60-65.

150 Zosimus, *Historia nova*, ed. Paschoud, II[1].39-42; Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 2.17.17-24; Agathias, *Historiae*, ed. Keydell, p. 21, lines 15-22, 25; Pseudo-Zachariah, 160; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 672, lines 11-12 (sledge hammers, crowbars and pick-axes that were clearly meant to be used for sapping or mining; cf. Haldon, "Theory and Practice", pp. 224-25); Vasiliev, *Byzance*, p. 242 (the Byzantines dug a four-mile tunnel in a failed attempt to capture Amida in 951); Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke, p. 164, lines 3-20.

151 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. Van Dieten, p. 82, line 66-p. 84, line 35; it was large enough to accommodate an assault party of 300-400 soldiers.

152 *Parangelmata Poliorketika*, ed. Sullivan, 53.1-54.12; cf. above, n. 58.

153 Wintjes, "Technology with an Impact"; cf. Brennan, "Combined Legionary Detachments

tence of *carroballista*-equipped units in the Early Byzantine period[154] and, though the paucity of evidence in the following centuries is debilitating,[155] one or two mentions of arrow-shooting engines used in a similar capacity indicate that the tradition of employing artillery pieces in a field role lived on in Byzantium until the 11th century.[156]

Nevertheless, scholars who look to identify signs of discontinuity are in the majority, resulting, as we have seen, in the promotion of quite a few theories on Byzantine technological regression. For instance, it has been suggested that siege towers fell into disuse in the Eastern Mediterranean, only to be reintroduced there during the First Crusade.[157] Another manifestation of this mentality is a view expressed by archaeologists regarding the replacement of *ballistrai* by archery in Early Byzantine fortifications.[158] Granted, the use of arrow-shooting machines in offensive operations is less conspicuous (or rather different to what was the norm in Roman times);[159] nevertheless,

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as Artillery Units" (composite units of *ballistarii* and missile troops holding bridgeheads on the Danube).

154 See above, n. 103 (Constantine Porphyrogenitus on the *ballistarii* of Cherson). Cf. Zuckerman, "The Early Byzantine Strongholds in Eastern Pontus".

155 The *ballistarii* of Cherson are mentioned in a Latin inscription dating from 369-75 (ed. V.V. Latysev, *Inscriptiones Antiquae Orae Septentrionalis Ponti Euxini Graecae et Latinae*, vol. 1, 2nd ed., St Petersburg 1916, no 449) and a Greek inscription dated 487-88 (ed. idem, *Sbornik grecheskikh nadpisei khristianskikh vremen iz iuzhnoi Rosii* [A Collection of Christian-Era Greek Inscriptions from Southern Russia], St Petersburg 1896, no 7). The only other evidence for the existence of artillery units in Byzantine cities is found in Justinian's novel *De armis* (*Corpus Juris Civilis*, ed. R. Schöll/G. Kroll, vol. 3, *Novellae*, Berlin 1895, no 85).

156 References to carriage-mounted arrow-shooters in Leo may or may not be the result of *mimesis* (see above, n. 112), but the mention of *χειρομάγγανα* (possibly akin to *cheiroballistrai*) and *ἡλακάτια* in the *Praecepta militaria*, ed. McGeer, 1.150-155, comes from the pen of a professional soldier and should be taken seriously. Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 470, line 91-p. 471, line 1 (in 1050 the Pechenegs besieged a Byzantine marching camp, but they were demoralized when their leader was impaled while mounted on his horse *καταπελτικῷ βέλει*), corroborates the use of mobile arrow-firing engines by the Byzantines.

157 White, "The Crusades and the Technological Thrust of the West", p. 101. White is not clear on whether he includes the Byzantine Empire or not; Rogers, *Siege Warfare*, p. 88, believes it is incorrect to assume any sort of Western technological superiority over Eastern Mediterranean states, but he too seems overly interested in mobile siege towers as the key weapon in the Crusaders' arsenal (cf. ibid., pp. 249-50).

158 Pringle, *The Defence of Byzantine Africa*, pp. 149-52; Gregory, *Roman Military Architecture*, vol. 1, pp. 152-53.

159 Cf. *De obsidione toleranda*, ed. Van den Berg, p. 98, lines 8-13, a reference to enemies barely able to field 10 stone-throwers against the Byzantines (the latter, however, sent no more

numerous references in written sources, as well as archaeological data, suggest that continuity in Byzantine siege technology was far more evident than most researchers would care to admit.[160]

All this should make historians of siege warfare all the more suspicious when faced with testimonies claiming that a particular piece in Byzantium's poliorcetic arsenal was a new invention. I am of course referring to the *laisa*, often mentioned in narrative sources and portrayed by pseudo-Heron as "recently invented".[161] Given all that we know about the long tradition of Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman machines made from plaited vine stalks, the author's claim (as well as modern theories regarding its supposed Slavic origin or exclusive use from the 10th century onwards)[162] should be taken with a grain of salt.

The aforementioned case is indicative of a tendency among modern researchers to identify possible instances of predilection towards a specific siege technique or weapon – much like the Crusaders' siege towers already discussed. Two examples may be offered. The first is the notion that Byzantine siegecraft *c.* 1000 leaned heavily on sapping and tunnelling, disregarding all other methods;[163] the second is the belief of students of the Komnenian period in the extraordinary performance of 12th-century trebuchets, capable

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than 12 against Crete in 949). On the other hand, Ammianus' excursus on the *ballista* (see above, n. 97) shows that it was a staple of 4th-century offensive operations; siege towers were equipped with bolt-shooters (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 19.5.6-7; Zosimus, *Historia nova*, ed. Paschoud, II[1].34.29-35.5) probably as late as the 10th century (cf. the "large *toxobolistrai*" mentioned in Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 673, lines 2-3), while their use on warships had increased exponentially (ibid., p. 669, line 21-p. 670, line 1).

160 For the frequent use of projectile-throwing machines in defensive operations, see Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. Seyfarth, 19.6.10; Procopius, *Wars*, ed. Haury/Wirth, 1.21.7-8, 5.21.14; Agathias, *Historiae*, ed. Keydell, p. 180, lines 3-4, p. 111, lines 16-26. An overview of references to the defensive use of engines during the Early Byzantine period may be found in McCotter, *Siege Warfare*, pp. 120-135. See above, n. 107, for *ballistai* defending the walls of 7th-century Constantinople. For the Middle Byzantine period, see Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, p. 384, lines 11-12 (quoted above, n. 132); Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bekker, p. 298, line 16; Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, ed. Hase, p. 78, lines 21-23. As for archaeology, the defensive use of projectile-throwing engines (mainly arrow-firers) has been confirmed by the finds in Romania and N. Italy (see above, nn. 41, 43); cf. Foss/Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*, pp. 45-46 and 180-181, nn. 14-16; Crow/Ricci, "Investigating the Hinterland of Constantinople", p. 252 and n. 85.

161 *Parangelmata Poliorketika*, ed. Sullivan, 2.3-4.

162 McGeer, "Tradition and Reality", pp. 135-38.

163 McGeer, "Byzantine Siege Warfare in Theory and Practice", pp. 128-29.

of destroying enemy fortifications.[164] Both theories are based on what the sources (appear to) say,[165] but their interpretation is essentially flawed. As far as surviving sources allow us to conjecture, at no point during the 10th century did the Byzantines favour sapping and tunnelling at the expense of other techniques/machines.[166] With regard to the supposed omnipotence of Komnenian trebuchets, it is true that references to their enhanced performance abound;[167] but even as late as the gunpowder era it was not unusual for mining to be used in conjunction with artillery to breach a substantial wall.[168]

There is, however, one fairly well-documented instance of a slight Byzantine preference towards a particular siege method: the aforementioned case of the long-distance blockade. Much like its classical predecessor, the *epiteichismos*,[169] this technique entailed the occupation of a fortified position within striking distance of the target; the position was then to be garrisoned and used as a base for launching raids against the surrounding region, to cut the city's supply lines and reduce its starving inhabitants to surrender. There is insufficient evidence for long-distance blockades before the Middle Byzantine period.[170] Narrative sources mention it during the events of 715, when rebel forces based on Chrysopolis captured Constantinople after a six-month naval blockade.[171]

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164 See in general Birkenmeier, *The Development of the Komnenian Army*, pp. 182-205.

165 Cf. McGeer's reliance on Nikephoros Ouranos, *Taktika*, ed. McGeer, 65.139-47; on 12th-century orators' fascination with stone-throwing engines, see Dennis, "Imperial Panegyric".

166 Siege ramps: Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Litavrin, p. 196, lines 11-13, 32-34; p. 198, lines 1-12; mobile towers: Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 670, lines 10-11; ram-bearing tortoises: Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 670, line 13; heavy trebuchets: Theodosios Diakonos, *Sack of Crete*, ed. Criscuolo, lines 716-26.

167 Greek sources may be plagued by exaggerations or classical allusions, but even Usāmah Ibn-Munqidh, *Memoirs*, trans. Hitti, pp. 143-44, speaks of Byzantine trebuchets capable of causing a breach.

168 Cf. Bradbury, *Medieval Siege*, pp. 224-25, on Ottoman tunnelling operations underneath the Theodosian Walls in 1453.

169 Westlake, "The Progress of Epiteichismos".

170 A loose blockade of Persian-held Amida was established in 503-04 (Petersen, *Siege Warfare*, p. 134), but cf. Evagrius, *Historia*, ed. J. Bidez/L. Parmentier, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius*, Amsterdam 1964, p. 232, lines 4-22 (the Byzantine besiegers of Martyropolis in 589 opt for a long-range siege, but are ordered by Maurice to resume a close blockade).

171 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, p. 385, line 24-p. 386, line 13. It is possible that the Byzantines emulated the Arabs' use of Cyzicus in a similar fashion during the first siege of Constantinople; however, current orthodoxy on the latter's timeline and tactics may need revision: cf. Jankowiak, "The first Arab siege of Constantinople".

After that, we lose sight of this method throughout the 8th and 9th centuries; however, we cannot be certain as to whether this reflects a change in Byzantine poliorcetic strategy or is simply due to a dearth of source evidence. Long-distance blockading reappears with a vengeance during the Macedonian era[172] and in 968-69 it proved its worth by helping the Byzantines capture the ultimate prize, Antioch.[173] Even as late as the Komnenian period the method was still popular: in 1097-98 a Byzantine commander advised the military leaders of the First Crusade to employ it once again against Antioch.[174] Lest we be misunderstood, however, we hasten to state that even this technique, favoured though it might have been, was still one of many used at the time.[175]

If the preceding paragraphs have taught us anything, it is that the Byzantines would favour any method that might prove to be labour- and (more importantly) cost-saving. It was this tendency that drove them to seek the easiest way into a city,[176] avoid building costly machines, and pay particular attention to logistics.[177] Along with the ability to combine new technology with time-honoured methods, this way of doing things "on the cheap" is the true mark of Byzantine siegecraft: when the soldiers of the First Crusade besieged Antioch, its capture took almost eight months and cost thousands of lives; in 969 the Byzantines accomplished the same feat with a mere 1000 foot and 500 horse.

Byzantium begun to wither after 1204, but we should in no way lay the blame for this on Byzantine engineers. For almost 900 years they had proven themselves equal to the task, cultivating the old ways and adapting to new realities, providing the means with which to defend and (re)capture fortified cities. However, even they could not achieve the impossible: maintaining a top-notch arsenal with inadequate funds and manpower. After 1204 the Byzantines continued to be involved in offensive siege operations; but, especially in the Empire's final 150 years, they usually did so as victims.

172 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravcsik, 45.67-94 (Leo the Wise, Romanos Lakapenos and Constantine VII himself repeatedly asked the rulers of Iberia to allow a Byzantine garrison into the fort of Ketzeon to sever the supply lines of nearby Theodosioupolis).

173 Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, ed. Hase, pp. 72-74; Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, pp. 271-74.

174 Rogers, *Siege Warfare*, pp. 26, 35; the Crusaders, however, disregarded Tatikios' advice.

175 Cf. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravcsik, 45.143-44 (in the heyday of long-range blockades, John Kourkouas conducts an old-fashioned seven-month siege of Theodosioupolis).

176 Agathias, *Historiae*, ed. Keydell, p, 21, line 15-p. 23, line 4 (Narses digs through the "Antro della Sibilla" beneath Cumae to save time and effort).

177 *Campaign Organization and Tactics*, ed. Dennis, 21.105-07.

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CHAPTER 11

The Army in Peace Time: The Social Status and Function of Soldiers

Philip Rance

During the Late Roman and Middle Byzantine periods, the place of soldiers in society and their roles and activities when not at war embraced great variations of time, place and context. The evidence for soldiers' status and function is chronologically and geographically uneven: documentation accumulates in late antiquity, owing to imperial law codes and Egyptian papyri, while corresponding Middle Byzantine source-material is comparatively meagre, especially during the 7th-/8th-century "dark age". In both periods the problem of defining a "soldier" (*stratiotes*) arises. Although different sources employ this term with varying degrees of specificity, between *c*. 300 and *c*. 1200 its usage encompasses a spectrum of full- or part-time, indigenous or foreign servicemen, ancillary forces and semi-private retainers, ranging from an elite guardsman patrolling a palace in Constantinople to a paramilitary "irregular" on seasonal lookout duty at a frontier pass, while in 10th-/11th-century texts "soldier" can signify a landholder who personally performed no military service but contributed to the upkeep of a combatant. "Soldiers" therefore differed not merely by rank, seniority or unit-type, but in their terms and conditions of service, legal status and institutional identities, which variously reflected their environment, socio-economic background, mode of recruitment, regional affiliations and/or ethnicity. Within this diversity, different mechanisms and approximate levels of remuneration, along with fiscal and juridical immunities, suggest that soldiers shared a relatively privileged position in society, even if Middle Byzantine sources record disparities in income and assets. In this context, the connection between soldiers and landholding, one of the most vexed issues of Byzantine military studies, becomes of pivotal significance for locating soldiers in society and clarifying a nexus of military, fiscal and agrarian interrelationships. Correspondingly, it is easy enough to delineate spheres of military-civilian interaction: as a coercive instrument of the state, soldiers performed diverse policing and internal security functions, enforced religious policies and intervened in imperial politics. They participated in regional economies, both institutionally, as state-salaried consumer or employer, and individually, through business and landed interests. As less-distinguishable

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aspects of military sociology, however, the presence and behaviour of soldiers, on and off duty, whether permanently stationed or in transit, affected the socio-economic patterns, cultural complexion and power relationships of urban and rural communities. By its nature the documentation, often reflecting civilian attitudes and furnishing little direct testimony to soldiers' self-perceptions, accentuates disputes and abuses and potentially overstates tensions that would be expected in any garrison town, past or present. Accordingly, identity, status and function are integrally connected, insofar as the varying impact of different classes of troops was a measure of their localisation and rootedness in civilian society, through origin, kinship, property and culture, and thus mirrors longer-term changes in the composition of Byzantine armies.

1 Who Became a Soldier?

Late Roman armed forces comprised long-service professional soldiers recruited by conscription, voluntary enlistment or hereditary obligation, augmented by non-Roman mercenaries. A tax-based system of annual conscription evolved over the 4th century whereby landowners, individually or in consortia, supplied recruits, typically from their rural tenantry, or paid monetary equivalents (*aurum tironicum*). These procedures operated until at least the mid-5th century. Thereafter legal provisions governing conscription diminish but never disappear entirely, while evidence of compulsion in levying recruits undermines neat distinctions between "volunteer" and "conscript". During the 4th century, sons of soldiers and veterans, regardless of rank and unit-type, were hereditarily obliged to serve, if physically able. Even if this legal obligation lapsed by the mid-5th century, sons customarily followed their fathers into soldiering. In general, evidence of coercion, draft-dodging and desertion, usually in connection with short-term military crises, should be balanced against the income, fiscal immunities and privileges that induced recruits to enrol and remain in the army. The longer-term orientation of recruiting was towards less Romanised rural and peripheral regions – the Balkan highlands, Taurus Mountains, Armenia – and ethnic groups with proven martial qualities, both within the empire – Isaurians, Armenians, Moors – and outside its frontiers.[1]

Beyond criteria of age, stature and fitness, enlistment regulations took account of socio-legal status. Legislation prohibited municipal elites (*curiales*, *decuriones*) from evading hereditary civic obligations by enrolling in the army. At the other end of society, degrading occupations, freedmen, slaves and, later,

1 Whitby, "Recruitment"; Zuckerman, "Two Reforms"; Lee, *War*, pp. 79-85.

bond-labourers (*coloni adscripticii*) were normally debarred, as bearing arms was deemed incompatible with servile status. Certain religious groups were also disqualified, notably heretics, pagans and Jews. Different classes of troops had distinct socio-cultural profiles. From the 320s, the army comprised two basic categories: *limitanei*, permanently stationed as garrisons in frontier zones, and *comitatenses*, operationally mobile units temporarily billeted in towns of the interior. Service as *comitatenses* was more prestigious and better remunerated, partly to compensate for their more disrupted lifestyle. Overall, *comitatenses* came from diverse backgrounds – veterans' sons, peasant free-holders, tenant-labourers (*coloni liberi*), impressed vagrants, semi-Romanised highlanders or "barbarian" tribesmen recruited as volunteers, prisoners of war or by treaty.[2] With *limitanei*, in contrast, long-term integration of soldiers and their families into rural society fostered a higher degree of socio-economic and cultural cohesion. While hereditary enlistment became customary rather than obligatory, 5th-/6th-century papyrological evidence suggests that service as *limitanei* was a privileged status typically monopolised by local "military families". This may reflect conditions peculiar to static garrisons of peaceful Egypt, though documentation for the 6th-/8th-century garrison of war-torn Italy confirms that military status was considered more a privilege than a burden. From the mid-5th century, many units of *comitatenses* were based semi-permanently in cities close to the eastern frontier, localising recruitment and affiliations and blurring distinctions between *comitatenses* and *limitanei*, though they remained legally and administratively distinct in terms of privileges and precedence.[3]

Various ethnic/tribal groupings or heterogeneous war-bands served alongside East Roman armies as "allies" (*foederati*, *symmachoi*, *enspondai*) in accordance with treaty obligations or in return for landed settlements within the empire. From *c*. 380 many non-Roman warriors enrolled in units of *foederati*, in effect "foreign legions" that accommodated "barbarian" individuals and groups within a regimental structure. They were subject to military discipline and received salaries, rations and fiscal-juridical privileges, comparable or superior to *comitatenses*, but their career patterns and discharge entitlements are poorly documented. In addition, during the late 5th and especially 6th centuries an unquantifiable proportion of the empire's soldiers were *bucellarii*, armed retainers serving in the retinues of senior officers and privileged civilian magnates. Privately recruited or seconded from regular units,

2 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 614-23, 647-53, 659-63.

3 Ibid., pp. 655, 660-61, 668-70, 685-6; Keenan, "Byzantine Army"; idem, "Soldier and Civilian"; Whitby, "Recruitment", pp. 70-72, 79-80; Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers*, pp. 82-108.

these officially-sanctioned, state-salaried *bucellarii* should be distinguished from unauthorised seigneurial militias prohibited in contemporary legislation. Their remuneration and advancement were closely dependent on their commander.[4]

Middle Byzantine soldiers generally exhibit a higher degree of socio-cultural homogeneity, even if the terms "soldier" (*stratiotes*) and "military service" (*strateia*) embraced a wider range of military-fiscal contexts. The withdrawal of East Roman armies in the face of Muslim invasions and their permanent stationing across Asia Minor *c.* 637-40s reconfigured the place of soldiers within the society, economy and culture of provincial towns and villages. The empire's armed forces were now largely distributed in territorial commands, later termed *themata*, whose armies evolved regional identities and perspectives, underpinned by highly localised patterns of recruitment and supply. Although ambiguous, the limited evidence implies that the legal basis of military service became hereditary obligation, apparently (re)introduced at an uncertain date before the Isaurian dynasty (717-802).[5] In addition, voluntary enlistment, and from the mid-10th century foreign mercenaries, were also important sources of manpower, varying according to date and circumstance.

Until the 10th century most soldiers belonged to a broad category of free-holders, often characterised as "peasant-soldiers". An integral component of rural communities, the soldiers in each *thema* were inscribed in registers (*kodikes*), which functioned as muster-rolls of potential thematic manpower and records of eligibility for fiscal exemptions. By *c.* 740 soldiers were expected to bear much of the expense of military service, including equipment and horses, from their own or their family's resources, in return for service-related pay and fiscal-juridical privileges. Differences in wealth, easily heightened by agrarian crises, therefore affected operational capabilities. During the 8th century, a distinction emerged within thematic armies between a core of "regulars", who served semi-permanently and participated in long-distance campaigns, and a "militia"-like force, which served seasonally and, on the whole, regionally. Although relative proportions remain uncertain, a growing majority belonged to the second category. The increased documentation of the 10th century shows that many thematic soldiers then possessed heritable landholdings, termed "military properties" (*stratiotika ktemata*), whose origin, tenurial status and historical implications are disputed. While thematic soldiers formed the greater part of Byzantine forces, in the 740s Constantine V

4 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 663-7; Whitby, "Recruitment", pp. 116-19.

5 Theodore Stoudite, *Letter* 7, ed. Fatouros. See Oikonomides, "Provincial Recruits", pp. 135-6; Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 23-5.

instituted the first *tagmata*, centrally-controlled, professional units based in Constantinople and its hinterland, whose number was augmented by successive emperors. Originally intended as a political counterweight to thematic armies, *tagmata* also constituted the nucleus of imperial expeditions. The origins and motivations of tagmatic soldiers were seemingly more diverse: staffed by a combination of hereditary obligation and volunteering, these corps included sons of Constantinopolitan and provincial elites, alongside less well-off thematic soldiers and, later, non-Byzantine warriors, attracted by superior remuneration, conditions of service and opportunities for advancement. Unremarkably, though promotions from the ranks for length of service or distinguished conduct are documented, middle-ranking and senior officer-grades, in *tagmata* and *themata*, were the preserve of men from relatively privileged backgrounds with advantages of wealth, education and inter-family connections, who in the provinces combined military office-holding with landownership.[6]

Until the late 9th/10th century, an ethos of personal and familial service persisted. If age or disability prevented a registered *stratiotes* from serving in person, a son or other member of that "military household" (*stratiotikos oikos*) took his place. In certain circumstances custom allowed a soldier to commute the notional value of his *strateia* into a cash payment, with which the government defrayed the cost of hiring a replacement. It is unclear when this practice began: the earliest evidence, mostly implicit, concerns 8th-/9th-century cases of selective commutation where personal service was impossible, such as juvenile sons of deceased soldiers.[7] By the mid-10th century, all *stratiotai* in a *thema*, by collective preference or imposition, might pay rather than serve in person on overseas expeditions. Correspondingly, a more pronounced contrast emerged between the *stratiotes*, the registered possessor of a military landholding, and the *strateuomenos*, the actual "serving man" supported, wholly or partly, by that holding, and thus a shift from personal *strateia* by the head of a military household, his son or kinsman towards substitution by an unrelated volunteer from the same or another *thema* or a foreign mercenary.[8]

From the 960s the state preferred to commute the *strateia* of "militia"-type thematic soldiers in order to fund full-time "professional" armies, comprising *tagmata*, "select" (*epilektoi*) thematic soldiers and foreign contingents, better suited to wars of conquest and garrisoning new fortified frontiers. A general

6 Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 328-37; idem, *Warfare*, pp. 270-74.

7 Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, pp. 143-5; Oikonomides, "Provincial Recruits", pp. 135-6; Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 23-4, 32-3.

8 Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, pp. 124-8; Haldon, *Recruitment*, pp. 49-62.

policy of fiscalising military obligations *c*. 1030-*c*. 1060 accelerated the demise of thematic armies in favour of *ad hoc* enlistment of non-Byzantine troops, at first in expeditionary forces but later for operational and fiscal convenience, one aspect of a broader "demilitarisation" of the empire's indigenous manpower following the high tide of imperial expansion under Basil II. Initially these foreign troops comprised "allies" (*symmachoi*) furnished on request by vassals or neighbouring rulers – Armenians, Georgians, Rus', Cumans – and in some cases incorporated as ethnically-distinct *tagmata*, but subsequently independent war-bands of mercenaries (*misthophoroi*), most conspicuously "Franks" from the 1040s. These developments recast the socio-cultural contexts and ethnic identities of "soldiers", with implications for their maintenance, the political involvement of armies and soldier-civilian relations.

2 Remuneration and Privileges

The legal status of a late Roman soldier, originating in the late Republic and modified during the Principate, entailed certain privileges with regard to his person, family and property. From the early 4th century, soldiers could normally expect to serve 20-24 years before claiming discharge with veteran status (*emerita missio*), though some, especially at higher pay-grades, chose to serve longer. They received an annual salary (*stipendium*), though owing to non-adjustment for depreciation this became of nugatory value and was phased out *c*. 400. The most valuable part of a soldier's cash income comprised donatives (*donativa*), paid in coin and/or bullion at the accession of a new emperor and every fifth regnal year, though Justinian possibly rationalised quinquennial donatives into annual payments. Soldiers also received "rations" (*annona*), with a fodder allowance (*capitatus*) for cavalry and mounted officers, which became the basis of military supply and remuneration until the 7th century. The *annona militaris* was a regular tax for the maintenance of troops, originally collected and disbursed as fixed quantities of consumables (bread, oil, wine, meat). This had the effect of obviating longer-term inflationary pressures. The state later found it convenient or advantageous to commute *annona* and *capitatus*, wholly or partly, to monetary equivalents according to locally-set schedules. Commutation (*adaeratio*, *exargyrismos*) gradually became common from the mid-4th century, at first and more often for *limitanei*, though *comitatenses* still received some payments in kind in the 6th century. Commuted *annona* became, in effect, basic pay, supplemented by donatives and allowances. Correspondingly, clothing, equipment, weapons and horses were initially issued to soldiers, but items of uniform began to be commuted

by the late 4th century, and weaponry and mounts by the 6th, when soldiers received regular cash allowances to purchase replacement kit and remounts. This easily-abused system clearly benefited soldiers, who violently rejected subsequent cost-cutting initiatives to reintroduce issues in kind, notably under Maurice.[9] Overall, from the 4th to the 6th centuries, the diversity of payments in coin or kind and variable rates of commutation render calculation of "average earnings" tortuously complex. Additional but unquantifiable sources of income included booty or rewards for outstanding conduct. Officers could supplement their salaries through various prohibited scams and customary or legalised perquisites, such as *stellatura*, a one-twelfth levy on the *annona* of *limitanei*.[10] From *c*. 532 Justinian reportedly suspended pay to *limitanei*, perhaps restricting payments to periods of active service, whereupon *limitanei* otherwise supported themselves from landholdings or commercial interests.[11]

Soldiers were accorded diverse fiscal-legal privileges. Until at least the mid-5th century, all soldiers enjoyed exemption from poll tax (*capitatio*), which was variously extended to wives and parents depending on troop-type and duration of service. Soldiers were also exempted from labour-services (*munera*, *angariae*), compulsory lodging of officials and military personnel (*hospitalitas*, *metatio*) and civic obligations (*munera curialia*). In accordance with the legal principle of *restitutio in integrum*, the state compensated soldiers for loss or damage incurred to their property during absence on public business. Long-standing testamentary privileges granted soldiers the absolute right to dispose of property obtained in consequence of military service (*castrense peculium*), unrestricted by prior claims of relatives otherwise prescribed in Roman law. Furthermore, if accused of criminal offences, soldiers could claim the right (*praescriptio fori*) to have the case heard before a military tribunal. This privileged juridical status reinforced civilian perceptions of soldiers as a self-regulating caste. Veterans' privileges varied according to length of service, rank and unit-type. Veterans retained existing immunities with additional exemptions from market and customs dues. Each received an allotment of tax-exempt arable land, estimated at *c*. 20 *iugera* (*c*. 13 acres), with seed and oxen. An alternative option of a cash bonus was discontinued by 364. By the 6th century, while Justinian's *Code* reiterates selected constitutions on veterans' fiscal privileges, its silence on land grants implies that the practice had lapsed. This change appears to coincide with enhanced customary rights to remain on

9 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 623-30, 670-74; Kaegi, "*Annona Militaris*"; Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, pp. 159-60, 166-8, 286-9; Mitthof, *Annona Militaris*; Lee, *War*, pp. 57-9, 85-9.

10 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 644-6, 676-78.

11 Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, pp. 210-11; Whitby, "Recruitment", pp. 112-13.

regimental pay-rolls, whereby five percent of a unit's personnel was guaranteed against discharge as unfit or infirm.[12] The state included soldiers' wives and children in measures designed to make military service more attractive. In certain circumstances families of 4th-century *comitatenses* were permitted to join them at their stations and possibly drew rations. Widows and orphans received pay owing to deceased soldiers and certain other emoluments. Justinianic legislation, reiterated or modified by Maurice (594), permitted sons of soldiers killed in action to inherit their father's rank and remuneration as a means of securing families against penury.[13]

Soldiers in the Middle Byzantine period were entitled to many of the same privileges, though aspects of their remuneration changed significantly.[14] Fragmentary and ambiguous data for soldiers' incomes and high variability in rates, frequency and conditions of pay (*roga*) complicate calculations and allow only general developments to be traced.[15] One consequence of the 7th-century fiscal crisis was a reduction of the cash component of soldiers' remuneration. Outside the cadre of full-time salaried personnel in each *thema*, the larger category of "militia"-type soldiers received pay only for periods of active service. By the mid-8th century thematic soldiers were responsible for procuring their weaponry, armour and mount, which were private heritable property, while some also provided their own campaign rations.[16] Fluctuating fortunes within this class of "peasant-soldiers" consequently resulted in some requiring material assistance from the state or their village community to fulfil military obligations. In contrast, *tagmata* were better remunerated: in addition to annual salaries, they received monthly rations (*siteresia*) and fodder (*chortasmata*), and were issued with clothing, equipment, arms and horses, or allowances to purchase requisite items.[17] The income of all classes of troops was potentially supplemented on campaign by gratuities and booty, which, by law, was divided equally among officers and men.[18]

12 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 484-94, 617, 635-6, 648-50, 653-4; Campbell, *The Emperor*, pp. 210-42; Palme, "Militärgerichtsbarkeit"; Lee, *War*, pp. 59-60.

13 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 630-31, 675; Haldon, *Recruitment*, pp. 21-4; Lee, *War*, pp. 142-4, 147-53.

14 Haldon, "Military Service"; Oikonomides, *Fiscalité*, pp. 37-40, 117-19; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, pp. 233-7.

15 Treadgold, *Army*, pp. 118-57 offers extensive conjectural calculations; Haldon, *Warfare*, pp. 126-8 is more cautious. See also Lilie, "Die zweihundertjährige Reform", pp. 198-201.

16 Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, pp. 146-9; Oikonomides, "Provincial Recruits", pp. 121-9; Dagron/Mihăescu, *Traité*, pp. 260-64.

17 Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 307-23.

18 *Ekloga*, ed. Burgmann, 18.

The documentation provides a clearer picture of the fiscal advantages of being a soldier. Like other rural inhabitants, soldiers paid land-tax (*demosion telos*) and hearth-tax (*kapnikon*), taxes relating to persons and animals, with associated surtaxes (*parakolouthemata*) and supplemental levies imposed on their community.[19] However, the property of a "military household" enjoyed exemption from diverse secondary charges, including obligatory provision of food and lodging for officials (*kaniskion*) or soldiers (*mitaton*), requisitions and compulsory sale of produce and livestock, and unremunerated corvées (*angareiai*) that were a regular, degrading and onerous burden on the majority of peasants.[20] Juridical and testamentary privileges accorded to late Roman soldiers persisted to at least the 10th/11th centuries, albeit with modifications recognising the different terms of service of Middle Byzantine soldiers. Most significantly, while the principle of *castrense peculium* (*stratiotikon pekoulion*) remained in force, emendations to its judicial application were introduced by *c*. 740 to recompense contributions a soldier's relatives or household might have made towards his equipment and maintenance. For reasons of military expediency, the law exempted his panoply from being divided up through partitive inheritance.[21]

This was at least the status of soldiers as prescribed in imperial legislation and military ordinances. The same sources allude to possible discrepancies between legal injunction and actual practice, especially in regions far from the supervision of Constantinople. Leo VI envisaged circumstances in which soldiers, though exempt from private labour-services that peasants owed to landlords, would be required to contribute unpaid labour to state construction projects – roads, bridges, ships or fortifications.[22] Mid-10th-century complaints about oppressive civil authorities, even if rhetorically exaggerated, articulate imperial concerns about any weakening or abuse of soldiers' privileges.[23] The mid-11th-century *Peira* records a case of a soldier, holding property on ecclesiastical land, whom church servants chased from his dwelling and killed. While the official held responsible, a *kourator* of Hagia Sophia, was condemned and compensation awarded to the victim's widow, the incident exemplifies the

19 Oikonomides, *Fiscalité*, pp. 24-36, 46-84.

20 Dagron/Mihăescu, *Traité*, pp. 264-7; Oikonomides, *Fiscalité*, pp. 85-121; Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, pp. 102-9.

21 Lilie, "Die zweihundertjährige Reform", pp. 194-8; Oikonomides, "Provincial Recruits" pp. 130-34; Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 303-7; "Military Service", pp. 21-23, 53-6.

22 Leo VI Tactica XX 71, ed. Dennis, p. 560; see Oikonomides, *Fiscalité*, p. 110.

23 *On Skirmishing*, ed. Dagron/Mihăescu, 19.5-9; *On Campaigning*, ed. Dennis, 28; with discussion in Dagron/Mihăescu, *Traité*, pp. 259-74.

vulnerability of less well-off peasant-soldiers to intimidation and ill-treatment by landowners or officials.[24]

3 Soldiers and Land

Scholarship has long recognised the fundamental importance of land to soldiers' socio-economic status and interaction with civilian society. Evidence for late Roman soldiers owning or holding land differs according to rank, unit-type and period. In theory, soldiers were prohibited from buying land in a province in which they were currently serving, ostensibly on the grounds that agricultural responsibilities might distract from military duties, though there was no legal impediment to soldiers inheriting or renting land.[25] Insofar as papyrological documentation from 4th-century Egypt permits analysis and can be considered representative, it seems that the landed property of current and former military personnel was individually modest and collectively formed a small proportion of overall landownership. Military landholding continued to be most typical of veterans, whose economic impact extended beyond investment in cultivatable land. Fl. Vitalianus, a retired cavalry officer residing in the Arsinoite (*c.* 370s), exemplifies the "entrepreneurial middleman" who combined renting and subletting marginal land with small-scale moneylending. There was perhaps a slight trend towards landownership by serving soldiers. Fl. Abinnaios, *praefectus* of a cavalry *ala* at Dionysias (*c.* 342-51), owned tenanted land nearby, in addition to loaning money and seed, and dealing in livestock, though his assets and economic interests are not easily gauged.[26]

By the mid-5th century some *limitanei* owned lands near frontier forts which they had probably acquired by diverse means – inheritance (perhaps originally veteran allotments), dowry, exchange – owing to their long-term assimilation into local society. Only in exceptional circumstances, such as Justinian's plans to reconstitute *limitanei* in newly reconquered Africa in 534, is there evidence of a systematic policy of granting cultivable lands to soldiers. These *agri limitanei* were accorded complete exemption from taxes and *munera*, a comprehensive immunity already considered "ancient" by 443, when these properties were also declared inalienable.[27] It remains unclear whether *limitanei* typically farmed their lands in person or through subtenants and/or dependent labour. Legal

24 *Peira*, ed. Zepos, 66.27.

25 *Digest*, ed. Mommsen, 49.16.9, 13.pr.-3.

26 Bagnall, "Military Officers", pp. 48-51.

27 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 649-54, 661-3; Whitby, "Recruitment", pp. 111-14.

prohibitions against soldiers engaging in agricultural employment primarily address the specific abuse of servicemen hiring themselves to landowners as estate managers, though a general incompatibility of farming and soldiering is implied. The best-documented case is a papyrological dossier relating to Fl. Taurinos, an officer in a cavalry unit stationed at Lykopolis (*c*. 426-*c*. 450), who owned or leased mostly small properties – grainland, vineyards, farm-buildings – scattered about the Hermopolite countryside.[28] Many obscurities persist. The archive of the garrison of Nessana (*c*. 548-*c*. 590), presumed to be *limitanei*, documents soldiers' ownership, lease and sale of property, but some of this land (in one case part of a patrimonial estate) was alienable and subject to regular taxation, and thus seemingly owned in a private capacity.[29] Increasing localisation of *comitatenses* from the mid-5th century created circumstances for acquisition of local land, though there is no evidence that their properties were similarly tax-exempt.

The origins of "military properties" (*stratiotika ktemata*) in the Middle Byzantine period remain disputed. The terminology is unattested before the mid-10th century, when successive imperial enactments elucidate existing practices and introduce innovations. "Military properties" were then variously-sized landholdings whose owners were registered *stratiotai*. Ideally, these holdings, whether cultivated in person or by relatives and/or tenants, provided income sufficient to cover the costs of equipping the *stratiotes* or a substitute. In return "military properties" were exempted from secondary taxes and labour-services.[30] The evidence relates overwhelmingly to thematic soldiers, though incidental references suggest that some tagmatic soldiers, when not on active service, resided on similar properties near Constantinople, specifically in Bithynia.[31]

Scholarly disagreement has focused on whether "military properties" were officially assigned by the state, as a means of remunerating and maintaining armies, or acquired by soldiers privately as a natural consequence of their integration in rural society. Crucial to this controversy is the extent to which "military properties" should be connected to the evolution of *themata*, whose chronology is in turn unresolved, though most scholars concur that this was a gradual process. In *c*. 637-640, following Islamic victories and vast territorial

28 Keenan, "Soldier and Civilian".

29 Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, pp. 208-10; Rubin, "Priests, Soldiers and Administrators".

30 Haldon, "Military Service"; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, pp. 231-55; McGeer, *Land Legislation*, pp. 15-21.

31 E.g. *Life of Peter of Atroa*, ed. Laurent, §110. See Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 297-9; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, pp. 235-6.

losses, East Roman forces were withdrawn north of the Taurus Mountains and quartered across Asia Minor in a series of *ad hoc* measures that, over time, acquired permanence. The issue hinges on whether this withdrawal was accompanied or followed by large-scale apportionment of lands to soldiers that would account for the "military properties" documented in the 10th century.

The 7th-century empire, with its greatly reduced fiscal base, struggled to recruit, remunerate and provision armies. State insolvency is manifest in the 620s-640s in reduced and/or rotational payments and salaries paid partly in bronze coinage. The near-complete disappearance of bronze coins from the archaeological record *c*. 655-60 suggests that emperors thereafter maintained provincial armies by means other than cash.[32] Some scholars infer that *c*. 660 the government granted soldiers land, on imperial estates and/or expropriated private property. This hypothesis is circumstantially attractive insofar as it accounts for a drastic diminution of imperial estates between the 6th and 10th centuries.[33] Certainly the government did grant land, often marginal or abandoned, to population-groups from whom it intended to recruit soldiers, but recorded instances involve one-off settlement of ethnically homogenous outsiders – renegades, refugees and prisoners of war – who were thus assimilated in accordance with long-standing Roman methods for accommodating "barbarians".[34] While the meagreness of 7th-/8th-century documentation cautions against arguments from silence, there is no positive evidence that emperors implemented a military colonisation of the countryside or sought to regulate or protect "military properties" from alienation, neglect or impoverishment before the 10th century.

An alternative proposition argues that soldiers were supplied, equipped and remunerated in kind, based on requisitions of provincial produce, materials and labour.[35] This view is consistent with their dispersal across Anatolia in a pattern seemingly guided by logistical rather than strategic considerations. Correspondingly, late Roman terms for exceptional levies or compulsory purchase (*ta extraordina*, *synone*) by the Middle Byzantine period designated categories of regular taxation, a terminological shift suggestive of regularisa-

32 Hendy, *Monetary Economy*, pp. 414-20, 619-62; Brandes, *Finanzverwaltung*, pp. 323-8.

33 Treadgold, "Military Lands", pp. 626-31; Hendy, *Monetary Economy*, pp. 634-45; Oikonomides, "Provincial Recruits"; idem, *Fiscalité*, pp. 37-40; Treadgold, *Army*, pp. 172-3.

34 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 611-14, 619-22; Haldon, *Seventh Century*, pp. 247-9; Whitby, "Recruitment", pp. 103-15.

35 Lilie, "Die zweihundertjährige Reform", pp. 32-4, 198-201; Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 11-20; Brandes, *Finanzverwaltung*, pp. 239-365; Brubaker/Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 682-705, 726-8.

tion of emergency measures.[36] Accordingly, when or how soldiers acquired lands after their withdrawal to Asia Minor remains a matter of conjecture. If localised recruitment transformed a unit's character and ties to neighbouring civilian communities within a generation, individual soldiers, whether quartered in encampments, billeted on inhabitants or living, at least seasonally, in their own households, may have first obtained land locally by purchase, gift, marriage, inheritance or appropriation. While this process is untraceable in Anatolia, similar developments are documented in contemporary Byzantine-controlled Italy, where the garrison became embedded in provincial society and landholding.[37]

Before the 10th century, there is no unambiguous evidence for a formal connection between possession of land and the *strateia* of thematic soldiers. Mid-8th-century legal sources indicate that a soldier's family might choose, but was not obliged, to support him materially with regard to all or part of his service costs. In return, the household benefited, directly or indirectly, from his privileged fiscal-juridical status and service-related income – pay, perquisites, booty. Two judicial rulings (*c.* 741), dealing with compensation owed to family members in the event of a soldier leaving the household, clarify that neither the soldier nor his *strateia* was bound to the landholding.[38] Incidental references in 8th-century sources – hagiographies, letters, historical narratives – appear to corroborate that *strateia* was personal and hereditary rather than tenurial.[39] Nevertheless, soldiers' landholdings became a factor in the government's fiscal-military calculations. Nikephoros I's enforced resettlement of soldiers from Asia Minor to Macedonia and Greece (*c.* 809/10), though hostilely reported, indicates how soldiers' property could be a consideration in strategic planning.[40] Early 10th-century thematic officials, charged with selecting superior troops from a muster (*adnoumion*) of registered thematic manpower, were instructed to consider not only physique and morale, but also a soldier's ability to equip and maintain himself, while poorer soldiers were assigned auxiliary roles – lookouts, garrisons, squires. By differentiating a cadre of prosperous soldiers, these criteria accentuated the implications of landed wealth.[41]

36 Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 13-15; Oikonomides, *Fiscalité*, pp. 70-72.

37 Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers*, pp. 101-8, 194-6; Lilie, "Die zweihundertjährige Reform", pp. 191-8; Haldon, *Seventh Century*, pp. 249-51.

38 See note 21.

39 Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 21-7, 54-5.

40 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 486. See Brubaker/Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 746-750.

41 Leo VI Tactica IV 1, XVIII 149, ed. Dennis, pp. 46, 498-500; *Sylloge tacticorum*, ed. Dain, 36.1-2; *On Skirmishing*, ed. Dagron/Mihăescu, 19.5. See Dagron/Mihăescu, *Traité*, pp. 262-9,

In the 10th century "military properties" became a focus of protective legislation.[42] The principal institution of rural society was the village community (*chorion*) of free smallholders, a territorial and socio-economic unit whose taxes and labour-services constituted the state's main source of revenue.[43] Closely integrated with non-military landholdings, "military properties" furnished by far the largest proportion of men and materiel for thematic armies. Imperial control of this fiscal-military system was eroded by the landed interests of "the powerful" (*dynatoi*), a flexible designation encompassing civil, military and ecclesiastical officials, provincial magnates and monasteries, who sought to amass agricultural lands, control peasant labour and attain local dominance. In particular, aristocratic clans, predominantly military in origin and character, combined provincial landownership with imperial office-holding to dominate certain regions, especially the central Anatolian plateau.[44] Severe famine in 927-8 exacerbated these longer-term developments, compelling smallholders to desert or sell their land and/or become dependent tenants (*paroikoi*). The earliest 10th-century land legislation is infused with the rhetoric of defending "the poor" (*ptochoi*, *penetes*) from the land-grabbing "powerful", who threatened the tax-base, manpower and authority of the imperial government.[45]

Six laws promulgated between *c*. 947 and *c*. 969 explicitly concerned "military properties" and their owners. Preceding enactments of Romanos I and Constantine VII had attempted to bar or nullify encroachments of *dynatoi* upon village communities, but their urgent reiterative tone suggests that *dynatoi* were able to circumvent imperial proscriptions.[46] Constantine's *Novel Concerning the Stratiotai* (*c*. 947) elaborated and codified the rights, privileges and obligations attached to soldiers' landholdings "which until now unwritten custom has governed", with the objective of preventing or reversing alienation of "military properties" and ensuring that, if lawfully transferred, they continued to support fiscal-military obligations. Specifically, this *Novel* assigned

275-80; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, pp. 238-46.

42 Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, pp. 115-131; Górecki, "Strateia"; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, pp. 399-444; Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 29-41; McGeer, *Land Legislation*, pp. 7-31; Górecki, "*Peri ton stratioton*".

43 Kaplan, *Les hommes*, pp. 89-134, 185-280, 399-408; Oikonomides, *Fiscalité*, pp. 24-151.

44 Hendy, *Monetary Economy*, pp. 85-90, 100-107; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp. 207-301.

45 Morris, "Powerful and the Poor"; Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, pp. 90-108; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, pp. 359-371, 399-444; Saradi, "Archontike", pp. 91-9; Howard-Johnston, "Crown Lands", pp. 75-81; McGeer, *Land Legislation*, pp. 25-31.

46 Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, pp. 90-93, 101-2; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, pp. 411-29; Saradi, "Archontike", pp. 99-111.

a minimum value to immovable property deemed "sufficient" for fulfilment of *strateia*: four pounds of gold in the case of cavalrymen and self-supporting thematic marines, and two pounds for other marines.[47] These limits established criteria for regulating the registration, sale, transfer and recovery of military lands. First, all *stratiotai* were henceforth legally required to record their lands, at least to the minimum value, in military registers (*stratiotikoi kodikes*). A system of registration probably existed, but was not previously compulsory. Second, *stratiotai* were prohibited from selling registered military land, a significant circumscription of their rights of ownership. Registered military land was heritable or transferable by non-commercial means – bequest, gift or dowry – but state officeholders (*axiomatikoi*) could not be beneficiaries and the heir(s) or assign(s) became singly or proportionally liable for the incumbent *strateia*. Constantine's *Novel* assumes that some *stratiotai* owned additional land, which they could optionally register, but only unregistered land in excess of the minimum inalienable value remained freely disposable.[48] For *stratiotai* who possessed property assessed at less than four pounds this restriction necessarily encompassed their entire holdings.

Constantine's *Novel* also reinforced measures for preventing peasant-soldiers' landholdings from becoming fiscally unproductive. If a *stratiotes*' property fell below the productivity required to sustain his *strateia*, existing legal provisions authorised the compulsory allocation of temporary "contributors" (*syndotai*), usually landholders in the same village, who became responsible for assisting him in fulfilling his fiscal-military liabilities. *Syndotai* were inscribed in the registers in proportion to their respective share of the burden, in effect a partial *strateia*. In this way, responsibility for funding a soldier could be shifted directly and personally to his civilian neighbours. This procedure possibly originated with poorly documented innovations attributed to Nikephoros I (*c.* 809/10). In cases of severe penury, the state granted exemption (*adoreia*) from *strateia* until the owner's fortunes revived. Indigent *stratiotai* were expected to perform less financially onerous duties as lightly-armed "irregulars" (*apelatai*), while their military lands were assigned to the administration of the fisc. Constantine's *Novel* clarifies that those granted *adoreia* retained the legal-fiscal status of *stratiotai* and their military lands remained barred from sale. These measures aimed to secure military land

47 Constantine VII, *Novel* (*c.* 947) A.1, 7, ed. Svoronos, pp. 118, 121. See Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Ceremonies* 2.49, ed. Reiske, p. 695; Nikephoros II, *Rescript* (*c.* 963/4) §2, ed. Svoronos, p. 176.

48 Constantine VII, *Novel* (*c.* 947) A.1, 7, ed. Svoronos, pp. 118-21. See Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, pp. 116-19, 151-6; Haldon, *Recruitment*, pp. 41-3, 46-7, 63-4; Górecki, "Strateia", pp. 167-8; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, pp. 242-50.

when vulnerable to alienation, in the expectation that both the property and *strateia* could be reinstated once the owner became solvent.[49]

Furthermore, Constantine's *Novel* offered *stratiotai* a judicial mechanism for reclaiming land of which they had lost possession by unlawful sale or involuntary transfer, by extending to "military properties" the legal principle of prescription (*longi temporis praescriptio*), whereby a person who acquired property only obtained legal ownership after a 40-year period during which his title remained uncontested by the previous owner or his heirs. The *Novel* permitted claims from not only the original owner or his heirs, but also his kin to the sixth degree, relatives by marriage, *syndotai*, comrades or other impoverished *stratiotai* willing and able to take on the incumbent fiscal-military obligations.[50] Constantine's *Novel* thereby promoted "reactivation" of alienated military lands and had the effect of extending *strateia* (as a fiscal obligation) to hitherto "non-soldiers". Subsequent legislation refined the terms governing recovery of alienated land, particularly the thorny issue of reimbursement of the current possessor. Aware that realities of local power and wealth enabled magnates to evade prior proprietorial claims, Basil II (996) strengthened judicial procedures by requiring magnates to produce title deeds and replacing 40-year prescription with a right of recovery in perpetuity, but enforcement doubtless remained difficult.[51]

The 10th-century legislation expresses a conceptual extension of *strateia* from a personal hereditary obligation incumbent upon *stratiotai* to a liability attached to the land that formed its economic basis. The more explicit association with land widened the application of *strateia* and ultimately weakened its personal and hereditary dimensions. Thereafter, anyone who lawfully acquired "military property" became liable for the attached *strateia*, including "non-soldiers" who, singly or jointly, came into its possession by bequest or gift, or appointment as *syndotai* or assignment of recovered military lands. Such cases entailed commutation of *strateia* into a monetary equivalent. Correspondingly, partial *strateia*, whereby two or more persons in proportion to their share in a property contributed to the upkeep of a soldier, facilitated registration and assessment of non-standard, fractional or discontiguous parcels

49 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 486; Constantine VII, *Novel* (*c.* 947) A.9, B.2; Romanos II, *Novel* (962) C.1, ed. Svoronos, pp. 121-3, 149; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Ceremonies* 2.49, ed. Reiske, pp. 695-6; *Peira*, ed. Zepos, 36.2. See Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, pp. 119-20, 135-6; Górecki, "Strateia", pp. 167-71; Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 30-32, 49-53; Górecki, "*Peri ton stratioton*", pp. 143-52; Brubaker/Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 746-750.

50 Constantine VII, *Novel* (*c.* 947) A.8, B.2, ed. Svoronos, pp. 121, 123.

51 Basil II, *Novel* (996), ed. Svoronos, pp. 200-217. See Kaplan, *Les hommes*, pp. 437-9; McGeer, *Land Legislation*, pp. 12-13.

of military land arising from partitive inheritance or fragmentary alienation.[52] Furthermore, emperors could (re)assign "military properties" to existing or newly enrolled soldiers, as acknowledged by Nikephoros II's *Rescript* (*c.* 963/4) concerning Armenian *stratiotai* implanted into eastern frontier zones and allotted landholdings in return for military service.[53] In this respect, Dagron distinguishes "paysans-soldats", farming patrimonial land and performing occasional hereditary military service, from "soldats-paysans", who acquired land as a consequence of choosing the profession of arms.[54] Overall, the state benefited from more intensive and flexible exploitation of the military-fiscal potential of land, whether through service in person or via a substitute or through commutation.[55]

While commutation of thematic soldiers' *strateia* had long been an option, over the late 10th/11th centuries progressive fiscalisation of their military obligations as a means of funding "professional" armies effectively turned *strateia* into a military tax on certain properties.[56] The piecemeal (re)conquest pursued by Nikephoros II and his successors shifted Byzantine strategic priorities from regionalised defence, largely reliant on provincial seasonal "militias", to protracted long-distance campaigning by armies of full-time soldiers and foreign mercenaries, trained in sophisticated tactics and furnished with specialised weaponry. In *c.* 963/4, Nikephoros II trebled the minimum inalienable value of "military property" per cavalryman to 12 pounds, a level of landed wealth beyond all but the richest *stratiotai*.[57] Justified by the greater expense of equipping the super-heavy cavalry favoured in this period, this measure implies circumstances in which the combined fiscalised *strateia* of several "military properties" supported one warrior. Nikephoros seemingly desired to register the entire landholdings of all thematic peasant-soldiers with a view to maximising their collective fiscal contributions, as reflected in reports of oppressive exactions during his reign. However, one cannot exclude the possibility of larger properties accumulated by a thematic military elite or mercenaries, enriched in recent wars of conquest that had increased availability of land.[58] In the longer term, *c.* 1030-*c.* 1060, selective "professionalisation"

52 Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, pp. 121-8; Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 24-9.

53 Nicephorus II, *Rescript* (*c.* 963/4), ed. Svoronos, pp. 170-73. See McGeer, "Legal Decree".

54 Dagron/Mihăescu, *Traité*, pp. 280-83.

55 Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 34-41, 49-50.

56 Ibid., pp. 32-9; Oikonomides, *Fiscalité*, pp. 37-40, 117-19.

57 Nikephoros II, *Rescript* (*c.* 963/4) §2-3, ed. Svoronos, p. 176.

58 Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 274; Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder/Büttner-Wobst, 16.25.15, 20-21. See Lemerle, *Cinq Etudes*, pp. 128-31, 265-7; Haldon, *Recruitment*, pp. 42-4, 60-62; Dagron/Mihăescu, *Traité*, pp. 278-80.

of military service and reliance on foreign contingents, financed by the fiscalised *strateia* of thematic farmer-soldiers, transformed "military properties" from a basis of recruitment to a source of funding, while thematic armies declined in significance and ultimately fade from the historical record.[59] In some regions imperial edict accelerated this process, as when Constantine IX (1042-55) converted all *strateia* in the *thema* of Iberia into a tax. Evidence for *strateia* from the late 11th century refers to a purely fiscal liability or tenurial category.[60]

While more common after the Fourth Crusade, a new form of conditional tenure called *pronoia* is indicative of the direction of military landholding in the twelfth century, though soldiers were also maintained by other means, such as cash stipends. A *pronoia* was a non-transferable, lifetime grant of possession and usufruct by which the emperor allocated fiscal resources, usually cultivated land and its tenant-farmers (*paroikoi*), to a *pronoiarios*, who thereby received revenues and services hitherto owed directly to the state. Varying considerably in value, *pronoiai* were characteristic of an increase in conditional grants of income-producing property to privileged individuals and institutions from *c*. 1070, when an acute fiscal-military crisis accentuated the need to replace or supplement monetary payments. It remains unclear to what extent this policy represents a face-saving legal fiction, whereby the government sought to preserve legal ownership of resources it found itself compelled to concede. While the precise significance of the term *pronoia* ("care", "provision") remains disputed, the underlying sense suggests "maintenance" of the recipient, even if such grants also entailed curatorial management of the property.[61] The technical usage emerges in early-12th-century tenurial records, when *pronoiarioi* already included soldiers of relatively modest socio-economic status.[62] Although *pronoiai* loosened imperial control of revenues, it was administratively simpler for the state to remunerate soldiers "at source" than through tax collection and disbursement. Potential advantages for *pronoiarioi* included independence from fiscal bureaucracy and enhanced proprietorial authority, notwithstanding the insecurities of agrarian production. A much-discussed passage of Choniates' *History* criticises Manuel I (1143-80) for replac-

59 Dagron/Mihăescu, *Traité*, pp. 183-6, 262-4, 280-83; Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 49-53.

60 Lemerle, *Cinq Etudes*, pp. 267-71; idem, *Agrarian History*, pp. 223-9; Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, pp. 109-12; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, pp. 253-5; Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 60-64; Bartusis, *Land and Privilege*, pp. 104-9.

61 Bartusis, *Land and Privilege*, pp. 14-63, 115-59.

62 *Acts of Lavra*, ed. Lemerle/Guillou/Svoronos/Papachryssanthou, nos. 64-6; *Typikon of Christ Pantokrator*, lines 1473-4. See Bartusis, *Land and Privilege*, pp. 32-63,

ing soldiers' pay with indiscriminate grants of arable land and "so-called gifts of *paroikoi*" to socially-inferior or "half-barbarian" recipients, with deleterious effects on the army and rural society. The object of Choniates' polemic is commonly interpreted as a large-scale extension of *pronoiai*.[63] *Pronoiai* possibly became a convenient mechanism for accommodating foreign mercenaries and defeated opponents, though other forms of military tenure are also documented.[64] Manuel's land grants broadly coincide with the settlement of Cuman *stratiotai* in the *thema* of Moglena sometime pre-1181, by implication one of several "Cuman *pronoiai*", seemingly soldier-herdsmen assigned smallholdings on imperial lands.[65] While the prevalence of *pronoiai* before 1204 cannot be quantified, this form of military tenure had not yet acquired the significance it attained in the Palaiologan period.

4 Socio-Economic Status

From the 4th to 12th centuries, equality of soldiers with respect to legal status and fiscal-juridical privileges did not mean equality of income or assets. There were always poorer and wealthier soldiers, even in the same unit, with divergence increasing according to rank, seniority, regimental precedence and professional environment. At one extreme, positions in certain palatine units were monopolised by Constantinopolitan and provincial elites through purchase or preferment. In *c*. 550 Prokopios bemoaned the bribery and sinecurism that had reduced the Scholae to ornamental troops, while *c*. 809/10 Nikephoros I raised the *tagma* of the Hikanatoi from adolescent sons of aristocratic families.[66] In antithesis, during the 580s recruits en route to the eastern field army relied on the charity of the Patriarch of Antioch for funds, food and clothing,[67] while the impoverishment of 10th-century thematic peasant-soldiers prompted a spate of remedial legislation. It is hazardous to generalise from extremities of a spectrum, especially when information is sporadic and anecdotal. Broad continuity in the socio-economic profiles of soldiers, however, suggests that they and their families normally enjoyed security from immediate want and in

63 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, pp. 208-9. See Bartusis, *Land and Privilege*, pp. 64-111.

64 Magdalino, "Byzantine Army", pp. 26-32; Bartusis, *Land and Privilege*, pp. 109-11.

65 *Acts of Lavra*, ed. Lemerle/Guillou/Svoronos/Papachryssanthou, nos. 65-6. See Bartusis, *Land and Privilege*, pp. 50-58.

66 Prokopios, *Secret History*, ed. Haury, 24.15-22. Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 119-28, 245-6.

67 Evagrios, *Church History*, ed. Bidez/Parmentier, 6.11-12.

many cases attained, if not wealth, then modest levels of prosperity commensurate with their military obligations.

From the 4th to 6th centuries, socio-economic data relating to "mobile" *comitatenses* is neither abundant nor explicit, as their service conditions ordinarily restricted commercial or landed interests likely to generate documentation. A relative standard of living must therefore be inferred from their remuneration. Rank-and-file *comitatenses* could expect regular cash donatives, rations beyond basic necessities, including meat, or their monetary equivalent, uniforms and/or clothing allowances, at least winter accommodation in urban billets with a fuel allowance, and a personal or communal servant. Even allowing for differentiation within and between units, this was an attractive profession for recruits typically drawn from subsistence peasantry or non-Roman warriors from materially less-sophisticated cultures. Potential exploitation or peculation by officers and administrators does not fundamentally alter this assessment.[68]

Corresponding evidence for *limitanei* or localised *comitatenses*, principally Egyptian papyri, indicates opportunities for supplementary income and investment. Some *limitanei* became rentier-landlords by purchasing or subleasing small-scale landholdings, sometimes accumulated over several generations. More generally, as in preceding centuries, serving soldiers and veterans rented buildings, loaned cash and produce as working capital, and invested in diverse facilities – pottery-works, looms, ships, bakeries – a pattern indicative of surplus resources.[69] In the later 6th century, perhaps reflecting curtailed remuneration under Justinian, some *limitanei* pursued additional occupations. The dossier of Patermuthis, who served at least 28 years (*c.* 585-*c.* 613) in a unit at Elephantine, preserves loans, conveyances and wills involving and/or witnessed by the junior officers and men of three units stationed at Syene, Elephantine and Philae, who apparently constituted a significant proportion of the property-owning and literate male population. Characteristic of a fusion of military-civilian occupational identities, at least among *limitanei* of the Thebaid, Patermuthis is variously described or describes himself as "soldier", "boatman" or "soldier by profession a boatman".[70] Around the same period, an eyewitness describes a devout soldier in Alexandria, who, for at least eight years, sat daily in a monastery courtyard weaving baskets and praying from daybreak to mid-afternoon, when he donned his uniform and joined his unit.[71]

68 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 646-9.

69 Bagnall, "Military Officers", pp. 52-4.

70 Keenan, "Byzantine Army".

71 John Moschos, *Pratum Spirituale* 73 (*Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 87.3, col. 2925).

Engagement in trades and handicrafts need not preclude combat effectiveness, but it is difficult to escape the impression that 6th-century garrisons of secure provinces like Egypt included chronically underemployed soldiers, who were in some cases socio-economically distinguishable from civilian tradesmen and artisans only by their entitlement to certain fiscal immunities and allowances.

In the Middle Byzantine period a thematic *stratiotes* was a free peasant proprietor whose landholdings were territorially, fiscally and familially interlinked with the properties of non-military neighbours. One 10th-century author articulates the equation of soldier and peasant by warning, if somewhat rhetorically, that soldiers left without regular training were liable to sell their horses and weaponry to buy oxen and farming equipment.[72] Overall, evidence for land values and the obligation to provide their own panoply, mount and sometimes rations suggest that soldiers should be classed among the better-off peasantry. However, the problem of more precisely locating soldiers on a socio-economic scale is complicated by evidence for stratification of wealth and contradictory perspectives of different sources.

Some documents identify *stratiotai* with the "powerful" (*dynatoi*), able to use status, wealth and force to dominate rural society, a picture only partly explicable as a conventional portrayal of abusive soldier-civilian relations. Even those 10th-century laws that depict *stratiotai* as vulnerable and oppressed nonetheless associate prosperous *stratiotai* with the lower echelons of the "powerful".[73] In contrast, a 10th-century letter of Symeon *magistros* to the Metropolitan of Patras, concerning alleged ecclesiastical encroachment upon military lands, equates *stratiotai* with the "poor" (*penetes*).[74] It is clear that diverse circumstances – economic, agrarian, military – could reduce some soldiers to hardship, suggestive of a borderline status between subsistence and surplus. Yet notions of "poor" or "poverty" encompassed shades of meaning. The 9th-century *Life* of St. Philaretos records how the saint donated his horse to Mouselios, an "exceedingly poor" soldier, whose mount had died just before a thematic levy. Even if this story is a hagiographical *topos*, the fact that Mouselios owned a horse mitigates the severity of his penury; indeed the author specifies that each thematic soldier was expected to attend with two horses.[75] Other sources assume that soldiers have the means to supply their

72 *On Campaigning*, ed. Dennis, 28.

73 Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bekker, 6.10; Constantine VII, *Novel* (947) D.1; *Novel* (*c.* 947) B.3, ed. Svoronos, pp. 102, 124. See Morris, "Powerful and the Poor", pp. 23-6; Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 56-8.

74 Darrouzès, *Epistoliers byzantins*, pp. 101-2 (11.5).

75 *Life of St. Philaretos* §3, ed. Rydén, pp. 72-4.

own mounts.[76] Correspondingly, imperial enactments concerning soldiers' properties conceive impoverishment in terms of inability to fulfil military obligations rather than an absolute or relative level of economic destitution.

Economic differentiation among thematic soldiers is manifest in different ways, some superficial, others with implications for operational capabilities. Although soldiers were obliged to furnish their arms, equipment and mount, 9th-/10th-century sources acknowledge alternative realities. As was previously observed, insolvent *stratiotai* were materially assisted by *syndotai* or granted *adoreia* from military-fiscal obligations and relegated to serving as "irregulars". Leo VI prescribes impositions on wealthy households to provide poorer soldiers with horses and even basic equipment.[77] The frequency and effectiveness of these expedients remain uncertain, given diverse instances of impoverished *stratiotai* or their families receiving no such assistance: a 9th-/10th-century letter of uncertain authorship petitions tax officials on behalf of a soldier's widow, who possesses "no horse, no quiver or helmet or sword" with which to equip her son.[78] With regard to campaign provisions, contemporary sources distinguish a self-supporting category of thematic soldiers from the majority who received rations (*siteresia*) from the state. Similarly, some soldiers could afford a servant(s), others pooled resources to share one.[79]

The evidence furnishes few figures susceptible to statistical analysis but permits estimation of comparative orders of magnitude. In accordance with prior custom, Constantine VII's *Novel* of *c*. 947 assigned a value of four pounds of gold (288 nomismata) to the immovable property deemed "sufficient" to support the *strateia* of a cavalryman or self-supporting marine. This was presumably a conceivable or unexceptional level of landed wealth for *stratiotai*, though it is not possible to determine the number or proportion who possessed property of this value. Elsewhere Constantine considers four pounds a minimum, but preferably five (360 nomismata), while Nikephoros II's later *Rescript* (*c*. 963/4) confirms that four was hitherto the legally-sanctioned figure.[80] A late 10th-century tale concerning St. Metrios imagines a 9th-century cavalryman having life-savings of three pounds (216 nomismata).[81] By way

76 *On Campaigning*, ed. Dennis, 28; Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bekker, 3.7; Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Litavrin, 2.59.

77 Leo VI Tactica XVIII 123-4, XX 205, ed. Dennis, pp. 482, 610. See Haldon, *Commentary*, pp. 139-43, 369-71.

78 Darrouzès, *Epistoliers byzantins*, pp. 130-31 (11.50). See Haldon, *Recruitment*, pp. 47-8, 55-7.

79 Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, pp. 146-9; Dagron/Mihăescu, *Traité*, pp. 261, 267-9; Haldon, "Military Service", p. 24; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, pp. 238-46.

80 See note 47.

81 Pseudo-Symeon, *Chronographia*, ed. I. Bekker, *Symeon Magister*, Bonn 1838, pp. 713-14.

of comparison, the *Ekloga* (*c.* 741) implies that a man with property valued at two pounds (144 nomismata) was considered "well off" (*euporos*),[82] while 10th-century legislation and later juristic literature reiterate a late antique legal definition of "poverty" (*aporia*) as immovable property of 50 nomismata or less.[83] Even allowing for wide variability in property values, 288 nomismata corresponds to a substantial allotment of cultivatable land, by one calculation roughly two *zeugaria* – the notional acreage ploughed annually by two teams of oxen. By implication, Constantine's *Novel* thus conceives the minimum landholding necessary to support a cavalryman's *strateia* to be fiscally equivalent to the agricultural yield and labour of two reasonably comfortable peasant households.[84] If taken literally, one might imagine a two-*zeugaria* landholding occupied by a *stratiotes* who went to war and a relative or tenant who managed the farm, circumstances broadly envisaged in legal, military and juristic texts.[85]

While these values reflect official notions of an "appropriate" landholding, a significant proportion of cavalrymen was undoubtedly less prosperous. Furthermore, 10th-century legislation never specifies minimum property values or protective measures for the many infantrymen documented in contemporary armies, who evidently possessed more modest assets.[86] The limited numerical evidence for commutation of *strateia* is instructive. Around 920-44, the *thema* of Peloponnese opted to pay rather than campaign overseas. Each soldier was to contribute five nomismata, but half this sum was accepted from those "wholly without means". The payment totalled 7,200 nomismata (100 lbs of gold), but the number of soldiers who paid the full amount is not specified. More enlightening is the case of Thrakesion in 949, where 800 soldiers were required to contribute four nomismata each. The total collected was 2,984 nomismata (41 lbs plus 32 nomismata), an irregular shortfall explicable if a proportion of impoverished soldiers similarly paid half, namely 108 men or 13.5 per cent.[87] These commutation rates imply that soldiers deemed "wholly without means" possessed property of roughly half the standard value but still well above legal definitions of "poverty".

82 *Ekloga*, ed. Burgmann, 17.29. See Treadgold, "Military Lands", p. 624; idem, *Army*, p. 176.

83 Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, p. 99; Saradi, "Archontike", p. 96.

84 Oikonomides, "Social Structure", pp. 111-15. Treadgold, *Army*, pp. 173-6 offers radically different calculations.

85 *Ekloga*, ed. Burgmann, 16.2; Leo VI Tactica IV 1, ed. Dennis, p. 46; *Peira*, ed. Zepos, 21.3.

86 Treadgold, "Military Lands", pp. 621, 624-5; Górecki, "Strateia", p. 165.

87 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravcsik, pp. 256-7; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Ceremonies* 2.45, ed. Reiske, pp. 666-7. See Oikonomides, "Social Structure", pp. 108-25

5 Interaction between Soldiers and Civilians

The activities and behaviour of soldiers, on and off duty, regularly intruded upon civilian spaces, both public and private. In late antiquity, the parameters of soldier-civilian interaction were partly determined by the differing service conditions of *limitanei*, rooted in one locality by family, landholding and personal associations, compared to *comitatenses*, who could expect transfers and long-distance campaigning, even if their "mobile" character is easily overstated. Nevertheless, although differing in frequency and intensity, in both cases military-civilian contact and its underlying legal basis concerned soldiers' demands for commodities and services. Legislative, documentary and historical sources report ill-feeling arising from these interactions but, inasmuch as "no news is good news", may misrepresent the incidence and scale of soldiers' rapacity, while providing little explicit testimony to the army's beneficial economic impact. Long-term strategic deployments of troops contributed to regional agrarian prosperity, as can be traced archaeologically in 6th-century Syria. Extensive investment in fortifications in less-populous frontier zones, notably at Dara in 505-7/8, employed civilians and, by creating new, state-salaried markets, stimulated longer-term agricultural production in the hinterland, thereby promoting a redistributive economy connecting the imperial centre with its peripheries.[88]

Locally-stationed soldiers routinely assisted civilian officials in levying *annona*, collecting taxes and rents, and conscripting recruits. Their coercive role and potential misconduct are addressed in 4th-century laws and vividly reported in letters of complaint about soldiers' brutality and plundering in the execution of these duties.[89] The passage or temporary presence of field armies had a briefer but more intrusive impact, especially on communities along arterial highways and cities in which *comitatenses* wintered. The responsibility for supplying troops in transit fell on the populace along their route. Notified of the army's requirements, provincial authorities requested foodstuffs and livestock from taxpayers, who deducted the value from annual tax assessments. If the supplies exceeded taxes owed for that year, officials resorted to compulsory purchase (*coemptio*, *synone*) or permitted taxpayers to offset the excess against the following year's assessment.[90] Sudden or exceptional troop concentrations could cause price disruption or severe shortages, as at Antioch in 362-3 prior to Julian's Persian expedition, while late 4th-/5th-century laws regulated

88 Pseudo-Zachariah, *Church History* 7.6. See Lee, *War*, pp. 98-100.

89 E.g. *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. Mommsen/Meyer, 7.4; 11.1; *Abinnaios Archive* 18, 27-8.

90 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 673-4; Lee, *War*, pp. 95-8.

socio-environmental consequences, including trespass on private property, pollution of watercourses and overgrazing of common pastures.[91] Similarly 6th-century legislation and military regulations aimed to protect taxpayers against damage, loss or exploitation.[92] Some communities sought additional security by petitioning the emperor, such as Ziporea in Paphlagonia, where an imperial ordinance (*c.* 527-33) safeguarding inhabitants from the depredations of passing soldiers was erected in "the most prominent spot in the village".[93] The most fraught aspect of soldier-civilian contact was billeting (*metatio*, *hospitium*), which, despite recurrent legislation against abuses, prompted perennial complaints from civilian authors, most graphically an account of conditions in Edessa while the eastern field army was based there in 502-5.[94] Non-exempt civilians were also subject to menial labour-services (*munera sordida*) – grinding flour, baking bread, burning charcoal, haulage, construction – though by the 6th century civilian contractors were sometimes paid.[95]

Outside official contexts, the picture of soldier-civilian interaction is again shaped by sources primarily concerned with abuses and disputes, which may be exceptional or prejudicially reported. Imperial rescripts forbade the army's encroachment on civilian-only judicial proceedings. Petitions to military officials were legally actionable only in criminal cases against soldiers, but litigants sought their intervention in all manner of purely civil actions. In some cases plaintiffs invoked their veteran status by way of justification.[96] This long-running infringement attests to soldiers' coercive power, which offered better prospects for enforcement of judicial rulings, and their gromatic expertise in boundary disputes, while in remote areas the local garrison was often the closest or only source of executive authority.[97] Some soldiers abused their juridical status and monopoly of legally-sanctioned violence to harass civilians – Abinnaios received a complaint about a drunken soldier who, having habitually terrorised a village, assaulted an estate official.[98] Consistent with this picture of military "muscle", increasingly punitive 4th- to 6th-century

91 Downey, "Economic Crisis". See *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. Mommsen/Meyer, 7.1.12-13, 7.3, 5.

92 *Codex Iustinianus*, ed. Krüger, 10.27.2; *Novel* 130; Maurice, *Strategikon*, ed. Dennis, 1.9.

93 Kennell, "Early Byzantine Constitution".

94 Pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 86, 92-6. See Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, pp. 297-304; Lee, *War*, pp. 164-73.

95 *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. Mommsen/Meyer, 11.16.15, 18; Pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 52, 54, 70; Pseudo-Zachariah, *Church History* 7.6.

96 E.g. *Abinnaios Archive* 28, 45, 47-8. See *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. Mommsen/Meyer, 1.7.2; 2.1.2, 9; *Codex Iustinianus*, ed. Krüger, 1.29.1, 46.2.

97 MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian*, pp. 54-5, 62-5; Aubert, "Policing", pp. 259-61.

98 *Abinnaios Archive* 28.

legislation prohibited soldiers from contracting themselves to landowners as stewards and rent-collectors or joining unauthorised paramilitary retinues, effectively privatising services they performed for the state.[99] Conversely, soldiers were accused of offering "protection" to tenant-farmers (*coloni*), enabling them to desert or defy landlords and repel rent- and tax-collectors. Libanios, bemoaning conditions around Antioch *c.* 390, condemns this army-sanctioned peasant anarchy, in which senior officers were complicit. Doubtless soldiers profited from such relationships and contemporary legislation indicates that "protection" (*patrocinium*) was a broader socio-economic phenomenon, though Libanios' rancour expresses the resentment of the traditional landowning class at the emergence of military patronage as a new dynamic in the local economy.[100]

In the 630s-640s East Roman forces abandoned the relatively urbanised frontier zone of upper Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine and withdrew to Anatolia, where cities and towns were fewer and sparser, military infrastructure deficient and landowning magnates dominant. Against a background of civic shrinkage and impoverishment, the dispersal of armies across Asia Minor was one dimension of a political, administrative and cultural "ruralisation" of Byzantine society that embedded soldiers within the dynamics of village life.[101] As products of hereditary and highly localised patterns of recruitment, closely linked to civilian neighbours by kinship, property and communal tax liabilities, it is generally assumed that thematic soldiers, despite their comparative prosperity and professional vested interests, identified with the opinions and beliefs of the provincial populace.

Within this socio-economic framework, Middle Byzantine sources provide fewer and less specific details of soldier-civilian relations, though similar interactions and abuses are documented. Partly reprising late Roman procedures, 9th-/10th-century arrangements for supplying armies in transit, implemented by the *protonotarios* of each *thema*, aimed to procure and stockpile foodstuffs and materiel along the route, principally through outlay of thematic revenues and/or requests to taxpayers for produce and livestock, the cost of which was deductible from their annual land-tax, without imposing additional fiscal burdens on the populace. In reality, the passage of troops, animals and

99 *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. Mommsen/Meyer, 7.1.7; *Codex Iustinianus*, ed. Krüger, 4.65.31, 35; 9.12.10; 12.35.13, 15; *Novel* 116. See Feissel/Kaygusuz, "mandement impérial", pp. 410-13; Whitby, "Recruitment", pp. 116-17.

100 Libanios, *Oration* 47.7-11, ed. Förster, vol. 3, pp. 407-10; *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. Mommsen/Meyer, 11.24; see MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian*, pp. 114-17; Lee, *War*, pp. 173-4.

101 Brubaker/Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 22-6.

camp-followers, and especially the imperial cortège, could cause economic hardship and social disruption through enforced sales, indiscriminate foraging and unpaid labour-services.[102] Official ordinances, reiterating older directives, sought to safeguard agriculture.[103] Nevertheless, 9th- to 12th-century historical narratives, though sometimes couched in rhetorical language, report ill-disciplined soldiery or mercenaries mistreating civilians and damaging property.[104] These exactions were experienced disproportionately by communities along military routes, though their frequency and impact remain difficult to gauge. Recurrent outbursts of hostility between provincial troops and the Constantinopolitan populace, albeit in exceptional circumstances, perhaps signal cultural antipathies between city and province beyond soldiers' opportunistic pillaging.[105]

There is little evidence for billeting (*mitaton*) between the 7th and 10th centuries, though military households continued to be exempt from this potential burden. The regionalised and/or part-time service of most thematic *stratiotai* lessened the incidence and inconvenience of billeting, while staging-camps (*aplekta*) mitigated the impact of imperial expeditions.[106] Diverse sources indicate a sharp increase in billeting from the mid-10th century. Letters of well-connected military, ecclesiastical or civil personages appeal to thematic officials for exemption for their own or relatives' households.[107] Correspondingly, imperial chrysobulls commonly specify exemptions from billeting and associated impositions.[108] The greater prominence of billeting reflects the changing character of Byzantine armies from largely self-supporting thematic levies, serving seasonally and returning to their homes, to selective full-time units and foreign mercenaries, supported by fiscalised *strateia* and obligations imposed on civilians. This process accelerated from *c.* 1040, whereby *mitaton* came to signify both in-transit billeting and extended quartering of troops before or between campaigns, typically "wintering" (*paracheimasia*), but, near

102 Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, pp. 107-9; Haldon, *Warfare*, pp. 143-8, 234-6.

103 Leo VI Tactica VIII 10 and 14, IX 1-6 and 16-18, ed. Dennis, pp. 148, 154-56, 158-60.

104 E.g. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 500; Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. I. Bekker, *Michaelis Attaliotae Historia*, Bonn 1853, 20.6-7; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 209.

105 E.g. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, pp. 371, 420; Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn, p. 274; Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder/Büttner-Wobst, 18.20.12-16.

106 *Basilika*, ed. Scheltema/van der Wal, 54.5.10 (= *Digest* 50.5.10.2). See Haldon, *Warfare*, pp. 145-54.

107 E.g. Nikephoros Ouranos, *Letter* 42, ed. Darrouzès, *Epistoliers byzantins*, pp. 241-2; Nicholas Mystikos, *Letters*, 170, ed. Jenkins/Westerink, pp. 496-9.

108 Oikonomides, *Fiscalité*, pp. 91-7, 262-74.

war-zones, potentially all year round, subjecting taxpayers to more expensive and protracted burdens, occasionally aggravated by a lack of socio-cultural cohesion between civilian "hosts" and mercenaries.[109]

The state's apparatus of military procurement, whether for expeditions or the routine supply of armies, could affect regional economies both positively, by providing markets and employment, and negatively in terms of dislocation of exchange networks and artificial price distortion. Extraordinary levies on lay and monastic estates or compulsory purchase secured agrarian produce, horses, draught-animals, vehicles and raw materials. By the 10th century, thematic authorities met demands for additional armaments and hardware by imposing mandatory contracts on local artisans. From the 1190s, the weakening authority of central government under the Angeloi exposed many regions to the unrestrained rapacity of officials, who maintained retinues and enriched themselves through arbitrary or unlawful exactions.[110]

Anxieties about unauthorised employment of soldiers resurface in Middle Byzantine sources. The *Ekloga* (*c*. 741) reiterates late Roman injunctions barring soldiers from employment or contractual obligations on private estates that might conflict with military duties.[111] Nevertheless, the very presence of soldiers in rural society affected local power relationships, while disparities of wealth and status left provincial soldiery vulnerable to exploitation. Constantine's *Novel* on soldiers' landholdings (*c*. 947) financially penalised *dynatoi* who took *stratiotai* into their service. He simultaneously forbade senior army officers to exempt *stratiotai* from their *strateia* in return for "gifts", by implication land, or to involve subordinates in illicit schemes. As thematic officers were often scions of regional landed families, both measures addressed the military implications of ascendant aristocratic clans, which sought to coerce or entice *stratiotai* into becoming tenant-farmers or armed retainers.[112] The government feared officer-magnates would use large retinues of kinsmen and clients to further their territorial and political ambitions, reflected in the proliferation of large estates, inter-clan feuding and, ultimately, attempts at imperial power, notably the rebellions of Bardas Skleros (976-9) and Bardas Phokas (987-9).[113] Recent scholarship stresses the regionality of aristocratic

109 Haldon, "Military Service", pp. 62-4; Magdalino, "Byzantine Army", pp. 27-8.

110 Oikonomides, *Fiscalité*, pp. 97-105; Haldon, *Warfare*, pp. 141-6, 236-8.

111 *Ekloga*, ed. Burgmann, 12.6.

112 Leo VI Tactica VIII 26, XIX 19, ed. Dennis, pp. 152, 510; Constantine VII, *Novel* (*c*. 947) C.1-3, ed. Svoronos, pp. 124-6. See Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, pp. 122-4; Dagron/Mihăescu, *Traité*, pp. 268, 282-3; Haldon, *Commentary*, p. 221.

113 Magdalino, "Byzantine aristocratic *oikos*"; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp. 303-13.

power in the 10th/11th centuries – largely confined to isolated upland districts of central Anatolia – and accentuates the government's ability to counter or contain decentralising tendencies. In particular, the creation of crown domains (*kouratoreiai*, *episkepseis*), directly administered for the profit of the imperial family, counterbalanced the expansion of aristocratic landholdings, especially in territories reconquered from the Arabs.[114]

Late Roman allegations of soldiers offering "protection" in rural society also find isolated echoes in later Byzantine documents. In 1152, Isaac Komnenos, son of Alexios I, bequeathed properties in Thrace to the Monastery of Panagia Kosmosoteira that he had founded at Bera. Isaac identified "certain soldiers who are taxpayers of mine" living in the villages of Tou Dilianou and Dragabasta, "who are often inclined to behave shamelessly towards their neighbours and the steward of my villages and are recalcitrant in paying taxes owed, emboldened perhaps by their military vocation". Isaac enjoins the abbot to cultivate good relations with these men as "well-disposed allies" able to protect the monastery from unspecified local marauders.[115] Other monasteries maintained forces of "soldiers", as documented at Patmos in 1091, apparently tenants with vestigial military obligations.[116]

6 Policing Duties

Soldiers were responsible for law enforcement, public order and assisting civil administration. Documentation of these roles is most abundant before *c*. 600, thanks primarily to law codes and Egyptian papyri, though the typicality of Egypt remains uncertain. The army's policing functions evolved during the Principate within the rhetorical framework of "imperial peace", whereby emperor and army were guarantors of internal and external security. Policing roles authorised at imperial, provincial or municipal level differed in social impact and inspired conflicting responses: while all classes benefited from stability, certain groups were more likely to suffer mistreatment from army personnel. Soldiers are thus variously portrayed as agents of law and order or state-employed thugs. At different times civilian magistrates, paramilitary

114 Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp. 213-29, 267-73; Howard-Johnston, "Crown Lands", pp. 81-98; McGeer, *Land Legislation*, pp. 13-15, 29-31.

115 *Typikon of Panagia Kosmosoteira*, lines 2007-18, 1265-6.

116 Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, p. 238; Bartusis, *Land and Privilege*, pp. 104-8.

militias, private guards and seigneurial retinues also performed policing functions.[117]

Late Roman soldiers cooperated with civilian authorities, particularly in revenue collection. Some routine procedures related to the army's logistical requirements, such as supporting provincial officials (*exactores*, *epimeletai*) charged with levying *annona* and conscription.[118] In addition, soldiers provided coercive force in non-military matters: Abinnaios, for example, was instructed by the *dux Aegypti* to provide a detachment to Makarios, *procurator* of imperial estates, to assist in collecting taxes. Contemporary legislation generally prohibited military encroachment on fiscal bureaucracy, but permitted deployment of soldiers against persistent defaulters.[119] Soldiers also engaged in diverse policing assignments. Palatine units guarded imperial residences, protected emperors and dignitaries, and controlled spectators during public appearances.[120] Provincial soldiers implemented laws and judicial rulings, escorted officials, and enforced state monopolies by seizure of contraband.[121] At the behest of municipal authorities, troops stationed in or near cities subdued disturbances, variously occasioned by imperial decisions, food prices or shortages, as well as scuffles between circus factions or religious strife. A few incidents escalated into riots or popular uprisings against the emperor or his ministers, notably at Antioch in 387 and 507, Thessalonica in 390 and Constantinople in 532.[122]

The army constructed and manned outposts or watchtowers along road networks prone to banditry, especially in mountainous or semi-desert regions of Anatolia and the Balkans. Although evidence is geographically patchy, these soldiers (*stationarii*, *burgarii*) were assigned to protect travellers and collect tolls and customs dues. More rarely, the army targeted districts or towns known to harbour brigands, notably the extermination of the Maratocupreni in Syria *c*. 369-70.[123] Pervasive brigandage and the lawlessness of magnates' retinues

117 MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian*, pp. 132-51; Aubert, "Policing"; Torallas-Tovar, "Police"; Whitby, "Recruitment", pp. 116-17.

118 *Abinnaios Archive* 18, 26, 35, 29. See Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, pp. 282-90; Zuckerman, "Two Reforms", pp. 81-5.

119 *Abinnaios Archive* 3; see *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. Mommsen/Meyer, 1.14.1; 11.7.16. See MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian*, pp. 60-62.

120 Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 125-8, 134-9.

121 E.g. *Abinnaios Archive* 9, 11. See MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian*, pp. 56-60; Aubert, "Policing", pp. 60-61.

122 Gregory, "Urban Violence"; Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, pp. 271-2; Whitby, "Circus factions"; Roberto, "Esercito e città".

123 Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, pp. 91-9, 172-86, 205-6; Farkas, "Räuberhorden in Thrakien".

across Anatolia prompted Justinian's extensive reorganisation of provincial administration from the 530s, which created new gubernatorial posts combining civil-fiscal authority with command of soldiers.[124] On the imperial fringes, opportunistic incursions by external nomadic or transhumant peoples blurred distinctions between "policing" and frontier security.

Regions of endemic banditry periodically slipped into large-scale coordinated rebellion, expressing separatist tendencies. The long-troublesome mountainous region of Isauria grew increasingly ungovernable during the 4th century, culminating in depredations throughout Oriens. A *comes rei militaris Isauriae* was responsible for implementing a policy of containment across an internal military zone over which the government exercised limited control. The Isaurian ascendancy in imperial politics (*c*. 465-491), along with extensive regional recruitment and clan factionalism, diffused demographic and political pressures, but Isauria was pacified only by large-scale military intervention *c*. 491/2-7/8. Samaria was another upland area of recurrent disturbances from the mid-5th century, experiencing major revolts (484, 529-30) with messianic overtones. Brutal suppression by the army with Arab auxiliaries, followed by provincial reorganisation (536), did not prevent intermittent unrest into the 7th century.[125]

Evidence for corresponding "policing" functions of Middle Byzantine soldiers is almost negligible. Aside from an overall diminution in source-material, specific factors reduced or modified military involvement in this sphere. The declining importance of provincial cities and towns transformed the environment and dynamics of urban policing. In particular, the circus factions ceased to be a source of disorder after *c*. 610.[126] Only for Constantinople and its hinterland is there evidence for "internal security" roles performed by *tagmata* under the emperor's direct control. Besides guarding palace complexes, ceremonial duties and garrisoning the capital, certain *tagmata*, notably the Noumeroi and later the Varangians, administered imperial prisons.[127] In the tenth century the Prefect (*eparchos*) of Constantinople had soldiers at his disposal for peacekeeping and surveillance.[128] Much of the documentation, however, concerns the involvement of *tagmata* in the arrest or persecution of opponents to state-sponsored Iconoclasm.

124 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 280-2, 294; Feissel/Kaygusuz, "mandement impérial".

125 Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, pp. 75-6, 89-90; Lenski, "Assimilation and Revolt".

126 Cameron, "Images of Authority", pp. 13-15; Whitby, "Circus factions", pp. 244-5.

127 Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 323-4, 356-7, 365-6.

128 *Epanagoge*, ed. P. Zepos, *Jus Graecoromanum* 2, Athens 1931, 4.8.

7 Ecclesiastical Politics and Religious Repression

Soldiers periodically implemented repressive measures against individuals, groups or communities in order to enforce doctrinal conformity and suppress heterodoxy, which was deemed harmful to the divinely ordained order and treasonous. Such episodes occurred primarily in relation to Christological disputes during the 4th to 6th centuries and, ostensibly, the Iconoclastic controversy (730-787, 815-842). It is unclear whether soldiers distinguished these operations from other forms of "law enforcement". It is also difficult to determine the typicality or veracity of reports of soldiers acting in this sphere – as gaolers, torturers, executioners or evictors – given that detailed accounts were usually written by the persecuted, at a later date, and ideologically constructed to reflect a common memory of armed oppression.[129] This role originated in the Roman army's involvement in persecuting Christians, which from the middle of the 3rd century became centrally orchestrated and empire-wide, culminating in the Great Persecution (303-11). Conversely, following Constantine's victory in 324, soldiers were assigned to destroy or despoil pagan shrines, either on imperial instructions or at the initiative of local military and/or ecclesiastical authorities. This activity, though never a reciprocal and systematic persecution of pagans, intensified with the anti-pagan stance of Theodosios I (379-91).[130]

The emperor's new role as guarantor of Christian orthodoxy drew the army into church politics and inter-doctrinal disputes.[131] The earliest instance is Constantine's struggle against the Donatists in Africa (317-21). The pro-Arian sympathies of Constantius II (337-61) and Valens (364-78) required soldiers to implement violent expulsions of Nicene bishops, clergy and congregations, notably in Constantinople in 342-4 and Alexandria in 356-8.[132] After the Council of Chalcedon in 451, in contrast, troops imposed pro-Chalcedonian bishops in some majority-Monophysite provinces, especially Egypt and Palestine. In Alexandria, where doctrinal factionalism aggravated long-standing propensities to urban violence, the installation of Proterios as bishop in 451/2 required the deployment of soldiers from Constantinople, while Juvenal, Patriarch of Jerusalem, regained his see from Monophysite control in 453 only after great

129 MacCoull, "When Justinian"; Brubaker/Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 128-35, 197-9, 772-99.

130 Lee, *War*, pp. 193-8.

131 Gregory, *Vox Populi*; Lee, *War*, pp. 198-205.

132 Sokrates, *Church History*, ed. Hansen, 2.12-13, 16; Sozomen, *Church History*, ed. Bidez/Hansen, 3.7, 9; Athanasios, *History of the Arians*, ed. Opitz, 81.1-11.

bloodshed.[133] Subsequently, though officially-sponsored actions cannot always be differentiated from popular sectarianism, 6th-century reports of military personnel assisting clergy in the eviction of Monophysite monks suggest that the initiative typically lay with individual bishops.[134]

Military interventions in religious affairs most commonly involved the deposition and arrest of bishops, dispersal of protesting crowds and installation of imperially-sanctioned candidates. Soldiers often escorted deposed prelates into enforced exile. Well-documented examples include the (third) deposition of Athanasios at Alexandria in 356 and of John Chrysostom at Constantinople in 404.[135] Occasionally the strength of public protest or risk of large-scale bloodshed induced the authorities to withdraw troops temporarily or resort to abduction.[136] Imperial orchestration of church councils sometimes required soldiers to constrain factional violence and ensure episcopal attendance and compliance, notably at the Second Council of Ephesos in 449.[137] Soldiers also evicted "non-orthodox" monks, clergy and congregations, and overawed refractory populations.

That fluctuations in the doctrinal opinions of emperors intermittently turned soldiers into agents of briefly prevailing "heterodoxies" (Arianism, Monophysitism) is less remarkable than the apparent willingness of troops to act as a coercive instrument of imperial or ecclesiastical authorities against any denomination. While the army had acquired a Christian complexion by the 5th century, it is difficult to ascertain soldiers' confessional allegiances. Justin I (518-27) required recruits to swear adherence to the Chalcedonian creed upon enlistment, though legal exemptions permitted Germanic *foederati* to worship as Arians.[138] Episodes of religious persecution produced occasional military martyrs – soldiers who disobeyed orders on account of their convictions or sympathy for the victims, but generally there is little direct testimony that violent encounters with clergy and civilians, even within religious sanctuaries, elicited opposition or qualms among the soldiery. It is tempting to infer ignorance of or professional indifference to Christological controversies. Some sources depict soldiers as habitually mercenary: one

133 Evagrios, *Church History*, ed. Bidez/Parmentier, 2.5, 8; Pseudo-Zachariah, *Church History* 3.2-8.

134 Pseudo-Zachariah, *Church History* 12.6; Pseudo-Dionysios, *Chronicle*, pp. 22-8, 36-8.

135 Athanasios, *History of the Arians*, ed. Opitz, 81.1-11; Sozomen, *Church History*, ed. Bidez/Hansen, 8.21-3; Palladios, *Dialogue*, ed. Coleman-Norton, pp. 57-8.

136 Sokrates, *Church History* 2.16; Sozomen, *Church History* 3.9; Palladios, *Dialogue*, ed. Coleman-Norton, pp. 56-7; Evagrios, *Church History*, ed. Bidez/Parmentier, 3.34.

137 Gregory, *Vox Populi*, pp. 143-50.

138 Kaegi, *Military Unrest*, pp. 82-6; Lee, *War*, pp. 176-93, 202-4.

Donatist author denounces troops "assembled to commit such villainy, thinking only of their pay", while an account of the dispersal of John Chrysostom's supporters in 404 complains that, as usual, the soldiers violently stripped women of their jewellery, "tearing off earrings with the earlobe itself".[139] Nevertheless, evidence of imperial authorities bringing in troops from elsewhere implies that locally-stationed soldiers were not always trusted to implement repressive measures. In 453, Juvenal, Patriarch of Jerusalem, employed Samaritans, ordinarily barred from military service, to massacre Monophysite monks when troops at his disposal were moved to pity.[140]

The Muslim conquest of eastern, majority-Monophysite provinces did not substantially reduce doctrinal tensions across remaining imperial territories. The half-century in which Monothelitism enjoyed imperial favour (*c.* 630-681) saw soldiers assigned similar roles, notably the depositions and trials of Pope Martin (653-5) and Maximos Confessor (*c.* 655-62). Records of Maximos' trial report that, during his detention on a military base at Selymbria in 656, regimental officers and clergy questioned him concerning profanities he had allegedly proclaimed against the Virgin. When Maximos' responses elicited sympathy among rank-and-file soldiery, a senior officer ordered his removal from the camp. This episode, reflecting what imperial officials had told the soldiers in order to justify Maximos' arrest, elucidates their religious preoccupations and level of doctrinal understanding.[141] Monothelitism surfaces as an exacerbating factor in military unrest or failure under Constans II (641-68), especially in Africa and Italy, though it is difficult to distinguish cause from pretext or scapegoating, and evidence for soldiers' active opposition to either Constans' Monothelite policies or the restoration of Chalcedonianism in 681 is negligible.[142]

Understanding the army's involvement in officially-sponsored Iconoclasm in 730-787 and 815-842 requires critical assessment of incomplete and tendentious sources. Recent scholarship maintains that the imposition of Iconoclasm was never as systematic or extensive as subsequent "iconophile" propaganda alleges. Accordingly, many later reports of soldiers engaged in a stock repertoire of iconoclastic oppression can be suspected of propagandistic invention. As part of a general purging of opponents following a conspiracy against him,

139 *Sermo de passione ss. Donati et Advocati* §6 (*Patrologia Latina*, vol. 8, col. 755); Sozomen, *Church History*, ed. Bidez/Hansen, 8.23.3.

140 Palladios, *Dialogue*, ed. Coleman-Norton, p. 57; Evagrios, *Church History*, ed. Bidez/Parmentier, 2.5; Pseudo-Zachariah, *Church History* 3.5. See MacCoull, "When Justinian".

141 *Disputation at Bizye* §14, ed. and Eng. trans. P. Allen/B. Neil, *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions. Documents from Exile*, Oxford 2002, pp. 114-17.

142 Kaegi, *Military Unrest*, pp. 183-5; Turner, "Trouble with the Trinity".

in *c*. 765/6-*c*. 772/3 Constantine V instigated a selective persecution of monks who refused to accept his imperial and moral authority. This brief "anti-monastic" campaign, implemented most vehemently in Thrakesion by the *strategos* Michael Lachanodrakon, involved expropriation of property, public humiliations and punishments, and some executions. The picture of the army's involvement in Iconoclasm that emerges is one of occasional violence against targeted individuals and groups, motivated by specific political events rather than a coherent iconoclastic programme.[143]

As in late antiquity, soldiers' religious opinions are not easily determined. Despite attempts by older scholarship to discern religious factionalism along geographical or institutional lines, there is no consistent pattern to the behaviour of thematic armies, whose shifting support for "iconoclast" and "iconophile" contenders in revolts and civil wars was determined by political, regional and material interests that transcended doctrinal allegiances. If some thematic soldiers harboured iconoclastic sympathies, and others iconophile, at least as many appear indifferent.[144] In contrast, later sources depict the *tagmata*, "recruited and educated" by Constantine V, as ardent enforcers of Iconoclasm, at least within the capital and its hinterland.[145] Episodes of militancy after Constantine's death seemingly confirm this assessment. A mob of tagmatic soldiers disrupted the abortive "iconophile" council convened at Constantinople in 786, though it is unclear whether this outburst was inspired primarily by pro-iconoclastic convictions or loyalty to Constantine's memory and fear of diminished status under the new regime. Eirene proceeded to restore images in 787 only after she secured support from thematic troops in neutralising dissident elements of the *tagmata*. Disaffected former tagmatic soldiers were prominent supporters of Iconoclasm at the start of its second period (815-42).[146] This identifiable group presumably supplied some of the soldiers who renewed the expulsions, imprisonments and beatings of irreconcilable "iconodules". The more radical policy of Theophilos (829-42) extended persecution beyond Constantinople to neighbouring provinces, but the target remained a minority of monks and clergy.[147] The absence of evidence for military reaction following the restoration of images in 843 cautions against

143 Brubaker/Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 128-35, 197-211, 234-47, 260-69, 642-63, 772-99.

144 Kaegi, "Armies and Iconoclasm"; idem, *Military Unrest*, pp. 209-43.

145 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 437, lines 1-3, p. 442, lines 24-8, p. 462, lines 8-10. See Kaegi, "Armies and Iconoclasm", pp. 60-61; Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 231-5, 344-6.

146 Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 232-5, 239-41, 345-6; Brubaker/Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 269-70, 277-8, 362-7.

147 Turner, "Parameters of Tolerance"; Brubaker/Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 376-84, 392-402.

assumptions about pervasive "iconoclast" sentiment outside the court-orientated vested interests of the *tagmata*, but also underlines the challenges of discerning doctrinal allegiances in a society in which public conformity with prevailing religious policy was a mark of loyalty to the emperor.

The only heresy to undergo large-scale state-organised persecution in this period was Paulicianism, a dualist sect of Armenian origin, which was sporadically suppressed from the reign of Michael I (811-13). The prior history of the Paulicians and the initial impulse for their persecution remain disputed; contemporaries identified Paulician doctrines as iconoclastic, anti-sacramental and subversive to ecclesiastical authority. The Isaurian emperors favoured Paulicians for their martial reputation and iconoclast sympathies, and although the sect's association with Iconoclasm does not explain the shifting policy of subsequent emperors, extirpation of Paulicians in eastern provinces sharply intensified *c*. 843/4, following the re-establishment of Orthodoxy under Theodora (842-56), when thematic troops reportedly slaughtered thousands and confiscated their property. Their flight and establishment of strongholds beyond the frontier, notably at Tephrike (*c*. 850-78), briefly turned Paulicians into an external enemy, who cooperated with Muslims in raiding the empire, until their defeat and dispersal in *c*. 878/9.[148]

8 Imperial Politics

Roman soldiers had acted as "kingmakers" since the late Republic and their support remained a foundation of dynastic legitimacy. Military intervention in imperial "politics" – civil wars, usurpations, revolts – is easier to describe than to explain, as variations in period, circumstance and participants defy generalising theories of causation. The limited purpose here is to trace changing patterns of incidence, distinguish which troops played what roles in politics, and identify factors motivating soldiers to support a usurper or defy imperial authority.

Armies performed a central legitimising role in the choice and installation of emperors, who sought to secure themselves against challenges by fostering ties of loyalty and gratitude. Late Roman strategies for reinforcing soldiers' fidelity included swearing an oath upon enlistment, orchestrated public rituals at accession ceremonies, and accessional and quinquennial donatives. Less tangible were the language and symbolism of affinity: emperors addressed troops as "fellow-soldiers"; regimental titulature often included imperial cognomina

148 Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bekker, 4.16. See Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 122-30.

or the epithet "loyal" (*devoti*, *devotissimi*, *kathosiōmenoi*); while slogans and images on coinage publicised links between emperors and armies. Such propaganda was especially important for 5th- and 6th-century emperors who possessed no authentic military persona.[149] In the Middle Byzantine period, official statements of legitimate authority acknowledge a "constitutional" role of armies in the acclamation of emperors. Imperial ideology accorded soldiers, alongside churchmen and farmers, a special position within the body politic as defenders of the empire and orthodoxy.[150] Soldiers were the emperor's "comrades" or "sons", their wives his "daughters-in-law".[151] In the absence of direct statements, however, soldiers' self-conscious "political" attitudes to imperial authority must be inferred from their reported behaviour.

The eastern Roman Empire largely escaped the successive usurpations and revolts that contributed to the chronic instability of the western empire. Eastern emperors proved more adept at controlling armies and, by not becoming puppets of "barbarian" generalissimos, avoided the fate of their 5th-century western counterparts. The most protracted military disturbances, during the reigns of Zeno and Anastasios, primarily reflected dynastic infighting and factionalism arising from Isaurian involvement in imperial politics (*c*. 440s-490s). The 6th century is striking for the rarity of rebellions inspired by the personal ambitions of would-be usurpers, while military unrest was limited in objective and regional in impact. Vitalian's insurrection in the Balkans (513-15) was seemingly motivated by sincere doctrinal views, even if he exploited soldiers' discontent over provisions. The mutiny that ultimately toppled Maurice (602) began as a protest by the soldiery about wintering north of the Danube.[152]

More characteristic of the 6th century were spontaneous outbreaks of indiscipline in combat zones occasioned by specific grievances, chiefly harsh service conditions, maladministration and pay arrears, rather than opposition to the imperial regime or broader ideological dissent. This was especially the case with hard-pressed, ethnically-heterogeneous expeditionary armies campaigning in Italy or Africa during the 530s-540s. Similar discontent underlies mutinies in the field armies of Oriens (588-9) and the Balkans (593, 602).[153] Whether unrest was incited by officers or soldiers acting on their

149 Lee, *War*, pp. 50-66.

150 E.g. Leo VI Tactica XI 9, XX 209, ed. Dennis, pp. 196-8, 610-12; Constantine VII, *Novel* (*c*. 947) Pr., ed. Svoronos, p. 118.

151 Leo VI Tactica, IV 1, ed. Dennis, p. 46; Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Military Expeditions*, Text C, lines 453-4, ed. J.F. Haldon (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 28), Vienna 1990, pp. 122-3.

152 Kaegi, *Military Unrest*, pp. 80-1, 89-94, 101-19; Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, pp. 165-9.

153 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 677-8; Kaegi, *Military Unrest*, pp. 41-72, 87-8, 101-19; Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*, pp. 159-60, 165-9, 286-9.

own initiative, political perspectives are conspicuously absent – it is not even clear that soldiers perceived opposition to an emperor as a means of effecting change, as logistical and environmental difficulties were localised in effect and perception. Furthermore, there is no consistent evidence of a distinctive and unified "officer corps" or other self-conscious military elite willing or able to make and unmake emperors. In the 6th century, middle-ranking officers were of diverse socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds, but predominantly professional warriors dependent on imperial favour, who seemingly identified with the interests of the regime so long as it furnished regular income, rewards and promotions. On the contrary, mutinies tended to elevate leaders from the bottom of the hierarchy: Stotzas (536-7), Germanos (588-9) and Phocas (602).

From *c.* 650 military unrest proliferated and shows more overt signs of the "politicisation" of soldiers, with frequent internecine conflict between thematic armies, notably a rapid succession of coups and rebellions in 695-726. Some general patterns and common characteristics are discernible.[154] In contrast to late antiquity, military rebellions were generally instigated by contenders for imperial power, usually *strategoi*, bent on seizing control of the entire empire. Owing to their proximity to Constantinople, the troops of Opsikion played a prominent role in power struggles of the late 7th/early 8th centuries. After Opsikion backed his rival, Artavasdos, in 741-2, Constantine V neutralised this potential power base by demoting and partitioning the corps.[155] Furthermore, Constantine instituted the first *tagmata*, palatine units based at Constantinople that would serve as a counterweight to thematic armies. Subsequent emperors augmented the *tagmata*, introducing into the capital personally loyal units, either newly created or transferred from provinces where they had formerly held commands. Exposed to the regime's ideology, *tagmata* evolved into zealous, government-controlled "security forces", shifting the balance of power from periphery to centre and reconfiguring the character of subsequent military unrest. In theory, *tagmata* were well placed to act as "kingmakers", but the various units could rarely coordinate action, while their intimate connections to the court made them easier to scrutinise and control, as evidenced by measures instigated by successive late 8th-/early 9th-century emperors to purge or counterbalance potentially seditious elements.[156]

154 Kaegi, "Political Activity"; idem, *Military Unrest*, pp. 154-269; Brubaker/Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 26-9, 627-42.

155 Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 191-214; Brubaker/Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 632-3, 740-43.

156 Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 231-56.

Fluctuating alignments of provincial armies from the 7th to 9th centuries exhibit few consistent patterns or entrenched rivalries, except that Anatolikon and Armeniakon, the two largest commands, were usually opposed, especially in the 740s-820s, while other armies aligned themselves around this polarity. The competitive loyalties of thematic armies variously reflected vested interests, regional particularism, personal or familial allegiances and patronage networks that are now difficult to reconstruct. Rooted in their respective territories, and locally recruited and officered, thematic armies display a high degree of socio-cultural homogeneity and cohesion. On the peripheries, such as Italy and Armeniakon, geographical and political marginalisation possibly intensified institutional, ethnic or doctrinal loyalties.[157] Enmity between *themata* also expressed the collective benefits – largesse, privileges, promotions – that might accrue from enthronement of their candidate. When, on the eve of battle against the Paulicians in 872, officers of Armeniakon and Charsianon quarrelled over who was more courageous, at issue was not only honour but also material rewards customarily bestowed by emperors at the end of campaigns.[158] Conversely, loss of precedence and booty, a perceived sleight or fear of disfavour was enough to tip a thematic army into revolt, reckoning that it might fare better under another emperor.[159] Friction between Asian and European troops first surfaces in the early-11th century in anxieties among the Anatolian aristocracy that Basil II's conquests in Bulgaria would diminish their prestige and create a rival focus of military patronage.[160]

How these factors operated at thematic or unit level remains largely conjectural. The loyalties and ambitions of *strategoi* were key determinants in shaping allegiances of armies, but middle-ranking and junior officers appear to have played decisive intermediary roles in orchestrating responses and maintaining solidarity, presumably in expectation of rewards and preferment.[161] It is more difficult to construe ordinary soldiers' motivations, beyond obedience to their officers' instructions, though circumstances sometimes offered opportunities for material gain, as when the troops of Tiberios III (698) and Constantine V

157 Kaegi, *Military Unrest*, pp. 182-3, 229-36, 326-30; Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers*, pp. 85-101; Brubaker/Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 630-34.

158 Genesios, *On Reigns*, ed. A. Lesmüller-Werner/I. Thurn, *Iosephi Genesii Regum libri quattuor* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 14), Berlin 1978, 4.36; Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bekker, 5.42.

159 E.g. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, pp. 465-9; Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bekker, 1.3.

160 Kaegi, "Political Activity", pp. 17-22.

161 Brubaker/Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 633-8.

(743) pillaged Constantinople.[162] It seems also that potential punishments for failed rebellions offered little deterrent. Rank-and-file thematic soldiers were rarely deprived of privileges or landholdings – a notable exception occurred in 793, when Constantine VI executed senior officers of Armeniakon, branded and exiled 1,000 rebels, and punished others with fines and confiscations.[163]

If patterns of military unrest from *c*. 650 signal a "politicisation" of armies, the reasons for this socio-political change are highly complex, but the broader transformation of East Roman society furnishes possible contexts. A gradual shift of confidence from secular and ecclesiastical institutions towards sources and symbols of spiritual power and intercession – icons, relics, Marian cult, holy men – may have left soldiers more ready to question the legitimacy and authority of individual emperors and to abjure oaths of loyalty to any who failed in his divinely appointed mission to defend the Christian empire.[164] Correspondingly, with the decline of provincial cities and towns as political, administrative and cultural centres and the demise of late Roman urban elites, thematic armies remained the main (or sole) setting for regular large-scale gatherings of the provincial populace, and thereby became institutional foci for expression of popular approbation or discontent, and self-conscious intermediaries between the provinces and Constantinople.[165]

Following the relative stability of the Macedonian dynasty, the period from the death of Basil II (1025) to the accession of Alexios Komnenos (1081) was characterised by political-military turbulence, exacerbated by the encroachments of new enemies – Normans, Pechenegs and Seljuks. The identity of the troops who now participated in imperial politics again mirrors broader military developments: the declining significance of thematic *stratiotai* coincides with an emerging preference for contracting non-Byzantine troops to fight domestic conflicts. The first clear instance is Basil II's request for 6,000 Rus' from Vladimir I of Kiev to suppress the revolt of Bardas Phocas (988-9), which became the nucleus of the Varangians. The creation of this elite foreign corps, like earlier "ethnic" *tagmata*, secured oath-bound warriors of personal fidelity, whose status as outsiders limited their role and ambitions within Byzantine power politics. Although not necessarily indicative of a new policy, it presaged a trend towards greater reliance on non-indigenous, professional warriors that

162 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, pp. 371, 420; Nikephoros, *Short History* 41, ed. C. Mango (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 13), Washington D.C. 1990, pp. 98-101.

163 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, pp. 468-9.

164 Cameron, "Images of Authority"; Haldon, *Seventh Century*, pp. 355-71.

165 Haldon, *Seventh Century*, pp. 99-124, 371-4; Brubaker/Haldon, *Iconoclast Era*, pp. 22-9, 625-9.

transformed Byzantine armies into largely foreign, mercenary and socially-deracinated institutions by the end of the 11th century. In the numerous civil wars and rebellions between the 1040s and 1080s, certain ethnicities became increasingly prominent. "Franks", principally Normans, were probably first transferred from southern Italy to the Balkans in 1043 by George Maniakes during his failed revolt against Constantine IX. Appropriated by the government, they were redeployed to crush the revolt of Leo Tornikios in 1047. Thereafter Byzantine dynastic instability provided employment opportunities for Norman mercenaries, who fought on both sides of imperial contests in 1057 and 1077-8.[166] After the battle of Manzikert in 1071, Turkic mercenaries also became key players in civil wars, notably the successful revolt of Nikephoros Botaneiates in 1078. On the whole, foreign mercenaries proved at least as reliable as thematic levies, insofar as they were dependent on their paymasters and unconnected to provincial vested interests. By the 1070s, however, some Norman war-bands under intrepid adventurers emerged as a source of instability, taking advantage of weak central government and the vacuum in regional security to carve out semi-autonomous personal domains in Asia Minor.[167] Such breakaway realms or "warlordism", never previously a feature of Byzantine military unrest, heralded the future political fragmentation of the Empire.

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166 Cheynet, "Role des Occidentaux"; Shepard, "Franks"; Magdalino, "Byzantine Army", pp. 27-32; Haldon, *Warfare*, pp. 91-4.

167 Simpson, "Military Unrest".

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CHAPTER 12

Military Technology: Production and Use of Weapons

Georgios Theotokis

1 Primary Sources: Problems and Interpretations

The primary sources for the study of eastern Roman arms and armour can be classified into three categories: (a) material sources (b) written sources –histories, chronicles, and the *Strategika* or *Taktika*, and (c) pictorial representations from ivory works, icons, illustrated manuscripts, church decorations (painting and sculpture), and mosaics.

Let me begin this section by sharing the negative view of a great number of modern scholars about the paucity of surviving artefacts and their pessimism about the possibility of creating a more general typology of the various types of Byzantine arms and armour, and swords in particular.[1] Although the level of archaeological information for the period from the second to the mid-fifth centuries has been reasonably good, no archaeological surveys have yet been conducted of Byzantine battlefields and one should not expect such work to produce satisfactory results for a number of reasons.[2]

Military rules regulating the behaviour of soldiers strictly forbade the discarding of arms and shields – the man who threw away his shield was considered a traitor.[3] The phenomenon of the *ῥίψασπις* or the *ἀσπίδαποβλής* – the discarding of the shield – had its roots in Antiquity[4] and was severely punished in the Byzantine army: "If a soldier casts down his weapons in battle, we order that he should be punished for disarming himself and at the same time for arming the enemy".[5] Nicephoros Phocas also rebuked a soldier for discarding his

1 Kolias, *Waffen*, p. 140; Fehér, "*Byzantine Sword Art*", 157-64; Nicolle, *Crusader Warfare*, p. 198; Grotowski, *Arms and Armour*, pp. 26-33, Porphyrogenitus 42; Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, pp. 101-3; Aleksić, *Medieval Swords*, pp. 7-18; Babuin, *Ὅπλα*, pp. 15-17; Bugarski, "A Contribution to the Study of Lamellar Armours", 161-79; Yotov, "A New Byzantine Type of Swords (7th-11th Centuries)", 113-24.

2 Bishop/Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, pp. 128-49.

3 Morillo, "Expecting Cowardice", 65-73.

4 Plato Phil., *Leges*, 944. 7; Aristophanes, *Pax*, 1186.

5 *Maurice's Strategikon*, p. 20.

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shield while on the march to Tarsus in 965, and he ordered that the soldier was to have his nose cut off.[6] Leo VI and Maurice also describe special formations to strip the wounded and the dead of their precious weapons and armour.[7] In addition, the spread of Christianity generally discouraged the deposition of arms as votive offerings or as grave-goods, which makes historians and archaeologists largely dependent on non-Christian burial sites.[8] Underwater discoveries like the one at Serçe Limani off the coast of Asia Minor in 1973 can only bring a sense of optimism.[9] Recently, however, a great amount of military equipment has been recovered in Bulgaria, and discussed in publications/a publication by Valeri Yotov and Raffaele D'Amato.[10]

The so-called *Strategika* or *Taktika* are literary works that contained constitutions and treatises of a military nature, which have been compiled by the author through personal experience or through oral tradition and other literary works of the past. These works greatly proliferated in the 10th century, when the Byzantines embarked on their conquests in the East and the Balkans, with the *Military Praecepts* of Nicephorus Phocas (*c.* 969) taking centre stage,[11] while Dennis has published a translation of three treatises *On Strategy* and tactics, probably all dating from the 10th century.[12] This kind of military literature is one of the fields in which cultural continuity between the Graeco-Roman world and Byzantium is more apparent.[13] Some of these authors were inexperienced "antiquarians" who were largely copying previous works in the field (Leo VI's *Tactica*[14] *and the Sylloge Tacticorum*) and adapting them to contemporary reality. Others were experienced military officers and their works seem to reflect contemporary practices (*Strategikon*, Phocas' *Military Praecepts*, the

6 Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, ed. Hase, p. 57 (Talbot/Sullivan, p. 105).

7 *Maurice's Strategikon*, II. 9, pp. 29-30 (Mango/Scott, p. 450).

8 Kazanski, "Barbarian Military Equipment", pp. 493-521. Sardinia and the necropolis of Pinguente (present-day Slovenia) are notable exceptions in the recovery of equipment from the 6th-8th centuries: Lilliu, "Milizie in Sardegna durante l'età bizantina", pp. 105-36; Torcellan, *Le tre necropoli alto-medievali di Pinguente*.

9 Bass/Matthews/Steffy/van Doorninck, *Serçe Limani, An Eleventh-Century Shipwreck Vol. 1*.

10 Йотов, *Въоръжението и снаряжението от българското средновековие* (*VII-XI век*); D'Amato, *The Varangian Guard 988-1453*.

11 Nicephorus Phocas' *Military Praecepts* and an incomplete version of Nicephorus Uranus' *Taktika* can be found in McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*.

12 Rance, "The Date of the Military Compendium of Syrianus Magister", 701-37.

13 Theotokis, "From Ancient Greece to Byzantium", pp. 106-18; Cosentino, "Writing about War in Byzantium", 83-99.

14 It would be too simplistic to see Leo's work as devoid of any originality: Theotokis, "Strategic Innovation," 112-14.

anonymous *On Skirmishing*, and *On Strategy*). Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that these manuals were a conscious adaptation to the geopolitical realities of the day and they encouraged improvisation in the battlefield rather than simply passing on obsolete battle-tactics.[15]

As the element of antiquarianism is ever-present in medieval European literature, J.F. Verbruggen has analysed both the limitations and general value of several medieval clerical and secular accounts. Others like R. Abels and S. Morillo have also highlighted the widespread tendency of medieval chroniclers to demonstrate their familiarity with classical terms then "in vogue".[16]

On account of the gradual transition from Latin to Greek in the language of the army from the 6th century onwards, many of the Greek terms in Maurice's *Strategikon* were still Latin words with Greek endings added and pronounced in a Greek way, like *δρούγγος* (*drungus*), *δούξ* (*dux*), *βάνδον* (*bandum*) etc. One explanation for this apparent antiquarianism could be the desire for standardization in a conservative institution like the Roman army, or perhaps, the level of illiteracy. An antiquarian strain also emerges when the authors of the *Anonymous Treatise On Strategy* and the *Military Praecepts* give detailed accounts of the Macedonian phalanx and its function in battle.[17] Perhaps these authors were rather using famous historical examples as tactical paradigms. In fact, the introduction of foreign terms such as the Arabic *saqah* shows that they were ready to adopt contemporary terms.[18]

Lay and ecclesiastical sources from the second half of the 10th century onwards contain a great deal of information on the army's weapons and armour and its outfitting. To give only a handful of examples, the *History* of Leo the Deacon is considered a much-valued source for 10th-century Byzantine warfare. Despite the fact that Leo records newly employed titles like *stratopedarches* and *taxiarches*, his terms for the army as a whole are archaic.[19] Anna Komnene was proud of her education and her command of the classicizing tongue; sheused many Atticising words and many Latin loanwords connected with the administration of the Roman Empire.[20] The *Alexiad* contains many detailed descriptions of weaponry in the course of her accounts, but when she

15 Kolias, "Η Πολεμική Τακτική των Βυζαντινών", pp. 153-64.

16 Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe*, pp. 10-18; Abels/Morillo, "A Lying Legacy?", 1-13.

17 *On Strategy*, ed. Dennis, pp. 52-56; Praecepta Militaria, 1. 65-74, ed. McGeer, p. 16.

18 *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 46.17, ed. Dain, p. 81; *On Skirmishing*, ch. 9, ed. Dennis, p. 170.

19 Talbot/Sullivan, *History of Leo the Deacon*, pp. 37-38; McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, p. 203, n. 14.

20 Buckler, *Anna Komnene*, pp. 481-508; Browning, "The Language of Byzantine Literature", pp. 120-21.

gives us the names of certain types of ships, which the Normans used for the transportation of their army across the Adriatic in 1081, she uses the word *triremes* that is reminiscent of early Roman terminology.[21] Nicetas Choniates' *Chronike Diegesis* examines the changes that took place in the Byzantine army in the time of John II and Manuel I Comnenoi but, as Hunger has pointed out, his work has shown considerable dependence on classical models in the description of arms and armour.[22]

The third and final category is that of iconographical representations taken from Byzantine art. It has often been pointed out that Byzantine art has been stylised and conventional and highly infused with Classical models.[23] This approach has often led historians to dismiss representations of equipment in Byzantine art as unrealistic and full of archaic and obsolete elements.[24] And even when these representations were, indeed, depicting the reality of their period, then one has to tackle another problem, namely whether these figures were girded in field armour or ceremonial armour.[25]

The portrayal of figures in military costume is surprisingly limited in the middle period and until 1204. There is Basil II's psalter portrait, found in the Marcian Library in Venice (Cod. Marc. gr. 17), portraying Basil as Christian emperor and Roman general.[26] Others include the effigies in coins and seals of the emperors Constantine IX and Isaac I Komnenos,[27] and an equestrian portrait of John I Tzimiskes.[28] Of the historical texts, two of the three date from the late 13th and 14th centuries, namely the *Historia Syntomos* of George the Monk and the *Chronicle* of Constantine Manasses. The most valuable source of infor-

21 Anna Komnene, *Alexias,* III 9, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 110 (Dawes, p. 64).

22 Hunger, *Literatur* I, pp. 429-41.

23 Weitzmann, "The Classical Mode in the Period of the Macedonian Emperors", pp. 71-85.

24 Parani considers the representations of soldiers in Byzantine art as unrealistic: *Religious Iconography*, p. 143. D'Amato, on the other hand, in his examination of frescoes representing the scene of the Betrayal, has concluded that the usual consideration of the Byzantine iconography as conventional is misguided: D'Amato, "The Betrayal", pp. 69-95; idem, "A Prôtospatharios, Magistros, and Strategos Autokrator of 11th cent.", 5-7.

25 Nicolle, "*Byzantine and Islamic Arms and Armour*", 299-301.

26 Cutler, "The Psalter of Basil II [part 2]", 9-15.

27 *Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Seals Online Catalogue* (accessed 11.07.2014): BZS.1955.1.4319 (formerly DO 55.1.4319); BZS.1955.1.4321 (formerly DO 55.1.4321); BZS.1955.1.4320 (formerly DO 55.1.4320). For the coin depicting Constantine IX, currently at Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, 1951.31.4.1581: Nelson, "Byzantine Art of War in the Tenth Century", 176, fig. 5. The depictions of emperors in armour begin to multiply after 1204 in the areas of the empires of Nicaea and Trapezounta: Gounarides, "'Ενα Μολυβδόβουλλο του Αλέξιου Ά Μεγαλοκομνηνού", 247-61.

28 Thierry, "Un Portrait de Jean Tzimiskes en Cappadoce", 477-84.

mation is the 574 illustrations of the manuscript of Johannes Skylitzes' *Synopsis Historiarum*, currently in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid (Matritiensis Vitr. 26-2). With depicted scenes from various everyday life snapshots, and also from battles, pursuits and sieges, many of the Byzantine individuals are depicted in military attire, including several types of arms and armour in use at the time of the illustration (not the writing) of the *Synopsis*, which is variously dated from the early 12th to the 14th centuries.[29]

2 Imperial Legislation on the Use of Weapons

The *Codex Justinianus* included a number of provisions regarding the use of weapons for self-defence and the protection of one's property either by a thief or a soldier in search of plunder.[30] These most likely targeted deserters who were a major threat for public peace and security and, practically, treated deserters and robbers as being one and the same. Roman legislation freely handed out to a person the right to self-defence by use of force – probably including weapons, although these are not specifically identified – against assassins, thieves and creditors, and to avenge another man's death.[31]

Since Roman law included a number of clauses that permitted the use of arms for self-defence, we can assume that the private ownership of weapons would have been commonplace. There were several attempts, however, by the state to limit the widespread use of arms, as it is clearly stated in the *Codex Justinianus* (11.47.1, 364 CE): "No one whatsoever shall, without our knowledge and advice, be granted permission to carry arms on a journey".[32] Significantly, however, the aforementioned law issued by Valentinian and Valens in 364 CE was repealed, first in 391 as we saw, and then again in 403 CE, probably as a response to the Germanic attacks on Roman territories.[33] Nevertheless, Procopius states that only officers of the army were allowed to enter into an urban area with their weapons in their hands rather than girded at the waist.[34] Additionally, the Russian-Byzantine treaty of September 911, included a clause which forbade any Rus soldier from entering the city of Constantinople bear-

29 Skylitzes Matritensis, ed. Cirac Estopanan; Tsamakda, *The Illustrated Chronicle of Ioannes Skylitzes*; Hoffmeyer, "Military Equipment".

30 *Codex Theodosianus*, eds. Th. Momsen/P.M. Meyer, Berlin 1905, 9.14.2.; *Codex Justinianus*, ed. Scott, 3.27.1. (391 CE); Tysse, "Roman Legal Treatment of Self", 161-76.

31 *Codex Justinianus*, ed. Scott, 9.16.2 (243 CE); 10.1.5 (end of 3rd century).

32 Ibid., 11.47.1 (364 CE).

33 Ibid., 3.27.2 (403 CE).

34 Procopius, *History of the wars*, 4.28. 7-8, vol. II, p. 446; Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 152-53.

ing arms and without an imperial escort – a reasonable measure taken against a former enemy.[35]

The production and distribution of arms and armour were tightly controlled and regulated by imperial officials and edicts in order to secure full control over the war-machine.[36] In the year 539, emperor Justinian imposed a state monopoly on the manufacturing and distribution of arms.[37] In the preface of his Novella 85 it seems that the emperor was genuinely concerned for the well-being of his subjects, although his true motive would have been to prevent civil disturbances like the Nika Riots some years before.[38] State control over the production, distribution and ownership of weapons was retained in the following centuries, judging from sporadic evidence in later legislation acts.[39]

3 The Arming and Provisioning of Troops

For the two centuries between the reigns of Anastasius I and Heraclius, soldiers on garrison duty and in winter quarters were able to equip themselves by receiving a portion of their pay in cash.[40] Soldiers on campaign seem to have been supplied by provisions in kind, which was assessed at an *ad hoc* basis by the *praetorian prefect*.[41] As the Arab expansion of the 630s-40s would have been a shock to the system, Hendy had calculated that over half of the empire's annual revenues were lost in this period.[42] This territorial contraction would have made the supplying of the remaining troops in Anatolia an increasingly impossible task.

The shortage of cash reserves would have eventually led to the return to a system of provisioning of all the troops in kind.[43] And it was the role of the *apothèke* that was to prove crucial for the uninterrupted working of the sys-

35 *The Russian Primary Chronicle,* ed. Cross/Sherbowitz-Wetzor, p. 65.

36 *Codex Justinianus*, ed. Scott, 4.41.2 (455-57 CE)

37 Justinian, *Novellae*, ed. Schöll/Kroll, 85, c. 1 (539 CE).

38 Kolias, "Τα Όπλα στη Βυζαντινή Κοινωνία", p. 467.

39 *Basilica* 19.1.86, ed. J. and P. Zepos, *Jus Graeco-romanum,* 8 vols., Athens 1931 and Aalen 1962, V, p. 346; *Procheiros Nomos*, 39.9, ed. J. and P. Zepos, *Jus Graeco-romanum,* 8 vols., Athens 1931 and Aalen 1962, II, p. 217; Leo VI, *Constitutio LXIII*, in PG 107, cols. 561-64.

40 Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 113-15; idem, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, p. 232; Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* II, p. 670.

41 Kaegi, "Two Studies", 106-113.

42 Hendy, *Studies*, p. 620.

43 Treadgold and Hendy have argued that the equipment was sold to the troops: Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army*, pp. 181-82; Hendy, *Studies*, pp. 626-34 and 654-62. Haldon has

tem of provisioning the troops in active service. Administered by the *genikoi kommerkiarioi*, the *apothèke* can be defined as the storehouses and emporia where the surplus of state factories could be sold.[44] It was the *apothèke* of each province that was involved in the distribution of weapons and armour, thus acquiring the meaning more of a transportation network than a mere storehouse. The *apothèke* and the *kommerkiarioi* represent a much more fundamental shift from the simple transport of materials from the local storehouses to the commissioning of local contractors, charged with levying the necessary materials for a military campaign from the local producers and craftsmen as well as from the state-run factories.[45] The flow of cash in the empire allowed its soldiers to purchase their equipment themselves sometime after 840.[46]

For the period up to the reign of Heraclius, the state had maintained a system of imperial factories for the production of weapons and armour, the so-called *fabricae*.[47] The territorial losses sustained in the 7th century must have made it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, for the state to supply the army with its requirements in arms, especially when some estimates put the numbers of the Byzantine army of the 8th century at around 80,000 men in total.[48] The most viable option that was left to the central government was to promote local production.[49]

4 Offensive Weapons

4.1 *Swords*

The traditional sword of the Roman legionary of the Antonine period was the short *gladius* for close combat. In the 4th century, this weapon was gradually superseded by the *spatha*, a longer sword traditionally used by the *auxilia* and the Roman cavalry to strike at enemy warriors on the ground.[50] The reason

insisted on the provisioning of the troops in kind: Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, pp. 238-39.

44 Oikonomidès, "Silk Trade", 33-53; Hendy, *Studies*, p. 628.

45 Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske, pp. 657-74; Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, pp. 319-22; Hendy, *Studies*, pp. 626-34 and 654-62.

46 Oikonomidès, "Silk Trade," 41-42, 48.

47 *Notitia Dignitatum*, ed, Seeck, pp. 32-33; James, "The Fabricae", pp. 257-331.

48 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 617.

49 The *Strategikon* mentions armourers and weapons sharpeners, bowyers and fletchers as part of an army's baggage train: *Maurice's Strategikon*, XII. B. 7, p. 140.

50 Hoffmeyer, "Military Equipment", pp. 101, 107; Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 136-37; Haldon, "Early Arms and Armour," p. 69.

behind this shift might have been the necessity to fight against mounted warriors along the Danube and the East and the influence played by the "Danubian army-group".[51] Experimental archaeology has shown that longer and thinner blades make good cavalry weapons, providing a good grip and a powerful downward cutting motion.[52] Thus, the gradual adoption of the longer *spatha* can be directly correlated with the increased tactical emphasis upon cavalry, which brought a radical shift in the emphasis in fighting and the tactical structures of the Late Roman army and which, according to scholarly consensus, was one of the most notable differences between the armies of the Principate and the Dominate.[53]

There have been several attempts to establish a typology of Byzantine swords,[54] a task which has been made all the more difficult by the tendency of the Byzantines to adjust their manufacturing techniques to the best technical innovations of their neighbours.[55] This problem is exacerbated by the exceptionally few Byzantine swords that are known to have survived and by the fact that even fewer have been published. According to Babuin, only a handful of sword-blades from Sardes (7th century), Corinth (11th century), Georgia or Armenia (Serçe Limani, 11th century) and Bulgaria (early 12th century) add to the lamentably scarce archaeological evidence that survives.[56] Evidence from historical texts and pictorial representations shows that many swords of the Byzantine period fall into the category of the straight-bladed, round-tipped, double-edged weapons, capable of inflicting both a cutting and a thrusting blow.[57] Sources like Procopius and the *Strategikon* suggest that the influence of the Avars was particularly powerful in the Byzantine armies of the 6th century. According to Procopius, the best-armed horseman was equipped with a lance and a sword that was hung from a baldric or a shoulder strap on his left shoulder.[58] The *Strategikon* refers to cavalry spears in the shape

51 Lendon, *Soldiers and Ghosts*, pp. 263-68; Coulston, "Late Roman Military Equipment Culture", p. 478.

52 Conyard, "Recreating the Late Roman Army", p. 546.

53 Whitby, "Army and Society", pp. 515-31; Eadie, "Mailed Cavalry", 161-73; Lee, *War in Late Antiquity*, pp. 9-10.

54 Dawson, *Byzantine Infantryman,* p. 28; Aleksić, "Byzantine Spatha", 121-36; idem, *Mediaeval swords*, pp. 19-22; Yotov, "Swords," 113-24.

55 Kolias, *Waffen*, p. 27; Yotov, "Swords," 113-14; Nicolle, *Crusader Warfare*, p. 199.

56 Babuin, *Ὅπλα*, pp. 21-22. See also: Weinberg, "A Wandering Soldier's Grave in Corinth", 512-21; Nicolle, *Medieval* Warfare, p. 74; Yotov, "Swords," 114-15.

57 Babuin, *Ὅπλα*, pp. 24-25; Nicolle, "Byzantine and Islamic Arts", 302-3.

58 Procopius, *Wars*, I, i.9-15, pp. 6-7. See also: Justinian, *Novellae*, ed. Schöll/Kroll, 85, c. 4 (539 CE).

of the Avars, to supplement the swords of the cavalry, and of "Herul" swords for the infantry.[59]

Two-edged swords retained their prominence in the Byzantine army's armoury well into the 10th century.[60] According to the *Sylloge Tacticorum*, they were carried by the heavy-armed *kataphraktoi* suspended from the left shoulder and ranged in length from 0.936 metres, including the hilt, to 1.10 metres.[61] The military treatises of the 10th century, however, mention for the first time a new type of sword, the straight – gradually to develop a slight curve after the 10th century – single-edged sabre variously referred to as *paramerion* (*παραμήριον*) and/or *zostikion* (*ζωστίκιον*).[62] In fact, Nicolle notes that the straight sabre, common among Central Asian people, appears to have reached Byzantium well before the coming of Islam, with the use of its curved "cousin" only becoming widespread after the appearance of the Seljuk Turks in the 11th century.[63] This type of sabre gradually became the main weapon of the cavalry, and being suspended by the waist-belt, it was used for thrusting blows.[64]

4.2 *Mace*

In the eastern Roman Empire, the mace gradually became the cavalryman's weapon par excellence, only gaining in popularity during the 10th century.[65] This type of weapon is barely mentioned in the early 10th-century *Taktika*, whereas the descriptions of infantry and cavalry soldiers bearing several types of maces begin to multiply after the second quarter of the century.[66] The *Sylloge Tacticorum* refers to *βαρδούκια είτ' ούν σιδηροραύδια* as an offensive

59 *Maurice's Strategikon*, XII. B. 4, p. 139.

60 Leo VI Tactica, V 2 and VI 21, ed. Dennis, pp. 74 and 90; *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 39.2, ed. Dain, p. 61.

61 *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 38.5, ed. Dain, p. 59.

62 Other names for curved sabres – single or double-edged – used since Homeric time: *romphaia* (*ρομφαία*), *phasganon* (*φάσγανον*), *mahaira* (*μαχαίρα*) and *akinakes* (*ἀκινάκης*): *On Strategy*, 27, ed. Dennis, p. 86 and Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, p. 359 [romphaia]; *On Campaign Organization*, 16, ed. Dennis, p. 288 [phasganon]; Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, ed. Hase, p. 56 (Talbot/Sullivan, p. 105) [mahaira]; Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, I 9, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis p. 35 (Dawes, p. 21) [*akinakes*]. See also: Babuin, *Ὅπλα*, pp. 26-28; D'Amato, "The Betrayal," pp. 71-72, fig. 2; p. 80, figs. 24 and 25.

63 Nicolle, "Byzantine and Islamic Arts," 303-5.

64 Leo VI Tactica, VI 2, ed. Dennis, p. 82; *Praecepta Militaria*, I 25-37 and III 53-60, ed. McGeer, pp. 14, 36; Constantine Porphyrogenniuts, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 500; *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 38.5 and 39.2, ed. Dain, pp. 59, 61; Tsamakda, figs. 83, 180.

65 Nicolle, *Early Medieval Islamic Arms and* Armour, pp. 132-33; D'Amato, "War-Mace in Byzantium", 7-48.

66 Leo VI Tactica, VI. 23, ed. Dennis, p. 94. [*bardoukion*]. See also: Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 173-84.

weapon of the cavalry along with the paramerion, while the *Praecepta Militaria* of Nicephorus Phocas prescribe the *σιδηροράβδια* to the heavy infantry of the *οπλίται* and the *σιδηροράβδια* with all-iron heads to the *kataphraktoi*.[67] According to Phocas, the all-iron heads must have "sharp corners and be three-cornered, four-cornered, or six cornered", probably denoting the different types of mace-heads with three, four, or more spikes fitted in a wooden shaft.

Leo the Deacon mentions the mace with the term *κορύνη* twice in his work: when describing the retreat of the defeated Bardas Phocas who crushed the helmet and skull of an enemy warrior with a mace, and when Theodore Lalakaon is said to have wielded it with such force as to crush his enemies' helmets and skulls simultaneously.[68] Eustathios of Thessalonika narrates an incident when a eunuch defended a number of women and children inside the Church of St. Demetrius from the Norman attackers in 1185 by "brandishing his iron mace (*σιδηρέαν κορύνη*) in his hand".[69] The epic of *Digenes Akritas* is also particularly useful, providing us with references to the *σπαθορράβδιν*.[70] Choniates described the decisive role of the use of the mace (*κορύνη*) against the Hungarians in 1167 when, after having fought against their enemies first with lances and then with their long-swords, the kataphraktoi "took hold of their iron maces, and the blow against head and face was fatal".[71]

Although maces were the standard equipment of military saints in several regions of Serbia, they can very rarely be found in similar paintings in Byzantine lands, before the 14th century.[72] A rare example is a detail from the scene of the Betrayal in the Church of Panaghia Myriokephala in Crete (end of 11th century CE), where both spiked and smooth maces are represented besides war-axes and pole weapons.[73] Although there is surprisingly little archaeological evidence of maces excavated from Byzantine sites, there is a mace, found on the battlefield of Drista, which bears striking similarities to the Myriokephala frescoes.[74]

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67 *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 39.3, ed. Dain, p. 61; *Praecepta Militaria*, I. 25-26 and III. 54-56, ed. McGeer, pp. 14, 36.

68 Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, ed. Hase, pp. 125,145 (Talbot/Sullivan, pp. 173, 189).

69 Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, p. 116.

70 *Digenes Akritas*, 1457, p. 97 and 1724, p. 113; Nicolle, *Crusader Warfare*, I, p. 200; Babuin, *Ὅπλα*, p. 96.

71 Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, pp. 203-4; Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 89.

72 Parani, *Religious Iconography*, pp. 138-39.

73 D'Amato, "The Betrayal," pp. 74-75, figs. 7 and 12. Compare with the scene from the Skylitzes manuscript: Tsamakda, fig. 208.

74 D'Amato, "The Betrayal," pp. 74-75, fig. 8.

4.2 *Axe*

Because the axe (*πέλεκυς*, *τσεκούρι/τζικούριον*) was a typical agricultural tool of a Roman farmer, it also armed foot soldiers or the simple people defending their localities.[75] Its deadly nature is attributed to the fact that the whole weight of the axe is transferred to its relatively short cutting edge, smashing both armour and bone.[76] More conventional axes were used by the cavalry as well, judging by the 4th-century tombstone at Gamzigrad.[77] Axes could also have been used as projectiles, like the Germanic *francisca*, which was adopted by the Romans in the 4th century CE.[78]

Leo VI makes a sharp distinction between single- and double-bladed axes.[79] A single-bladed axe could have had either a straight or a curved blade. It was the distinctive weapon of the Imperial Guard, as attested by Greek sources, while the elite unit of the Varangian Guard was closely associated with the single-edged, two-handed Danish axe with a crescent-shaped edge.[80] Modern attempts to reconstruct an axe have wielded a weapon about 1.2-1.4 metres long, with a head of about 18 cm in width and 17 cm from point to point.[81] Axes are never represented as part of the equipment of military saints but, as a rule, appear in the iconographic context of the Betrayal, carried by the crowd, and in the Skylitzes manuscript.[82]

4.3 *Club*

Another agricultural tool that would also have been used in warfare was the club. In the written sources, there is a distinction in the terminology between

75 Kolias, "Οπλα," pp. 469-74, esp. p. 472, n. 33. Babuin, *Όπλα*, pp. 86-87, esp. p. 87, n. 7. Eustathios of Thessaloniki mentions a Byzantine defending his city from the Normans in 1185, using a type of axe called *αξίνη*: Eustathios of Thessaloniki, p. 104.

76 Conyard, "Late Roman Army," p. 546.

77 Bishop/Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, p. 205.

78 The *francisca* had an effective range of only 10 metres or less: Conyard, "Late Roman Army," p. 547.

79 Leo VI Tactica, V 2, and VI 11, ed. Dennis, pp. 74, 86. See also: *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 38.10-12, ed. Dain, p. 60; *Praecepta Militaria*, I. 25, ed. McGeer p. 14; Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 167-69.

80 D'Amato, *Varangian Guard*, pp. 35-36; Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meinecke, p. 8. Anna Komnene calls the Varangians *pelekyforous* (*πελεκυφόρους*): Anna Komnene, *Alexias* II 9, IV 6, IX 9, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, pp. 79, 134, 277 (Dawes, *Alexiad*, pp. 46, 164, 210) . In the last example, Anna uses *romphaia* and not *pelekys*.

81 D'Amato, "The Equipment of Georgios Maniakes", 42.

82 D'Amato, "Betrayal," 69-95, figs. 4, 5, 7, 9, 12, 14, 16, 17, 28, 29 and 30; Babuin, *Όπλα*, figs. 109, 114, 154, 155, 199; Tsamakda, figs. 50, 178.

the clubs used in agriculture (*ραβδίν*) and the ones used in warfare (*ρόπαλο*).[83] Leo VI attests to the arming of the *ψιλοί* with "ματζούκια ή τζικούρια ή ρικτάρια" (clubs, axes or other missile weapons), hand-tools which should have been carried in the wagons escorting the army in a campaign.[84] As the club appears to be the weapon carried by the crowd accompanying Judas in the arrest of Jesus, as described by the four Gospels,[85] it can be found in the iconography of the scene of the Betrayal; some wonderful examples can be seen in mid-11th century churches at Göreme, Cappadocia, where the men arresting Jesus are armed with several infantry weapons described in the Gospels, including clubs and swords.[86] In the Skylitzes manuscript, monks are depicted being beaten with clubs.[87]

4.4 *Spear*

The spear or lance was the primary offensive weapon of the warriors of Antiquity. Probably due to the element of antiquarianism in Middle and Later Byzantine art, we see the majority of the iconographic evidence depicting military saints carrying a spear rather than a sword.[88] It can be found in the sources under the terms *κοντάριον* (Lat. *contus*) *δόρυ* and *λόγχη* (Lat. *lancea*).

From the reign of Trajan onwards, auxiliary units were armed with a *contus* according to several archaeological finds in Algeria, Bulgaria and Pannonia. Coulston has associated the adoption of the *contus* with the Romano-Sarmatian contacts in Pannonia after the 2nd century CE – once again, the "Danubian army-group" can be held responsible for the adoption of foreign arms.[89] Since the 3rd century, legionaries also carried a spear, and while there is remarkably little evidence regarding the length of Roman spears, their size would have remained relatively consistent between 2.4 and 2.7 metres.[90] After the 4th century, the operational role of the *lanciarii*[91] was to be deployed in the first lines of the formation, standing their ground and delivering a killing blow with their

83 *Digenes Akritas*, *ραβδίν* (148, p. 11), *'υπόκοντα ραβδία* (1302, p. 87); Eustathios of Thessaloniki, p. 76; Kritoboulos, *Historiae*, ed. Reinsch, p. 54.

84 Leo VI Tactica, VI 23, VII 55, XIV 75, ed. Dennis, pp. 94, 134, 334; Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 175-77.

85 John, 18:3 and 18:12; Mark, 14:43 and 14:48; Matthew, 26:47 and 26:55; Luke, 22:52.

86 D'Amato, "Betrayal," 76-77.

87 Tsamakda, figs. 114, 121.

88 Babuin, *Όπλα*, p. 112; Grotowski, *Byzantine Iconography*, pp. 329-33.

89 Bishop/Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, p. 130.

90 Conyard, "Late Roman Army", II, p. 545.

91 Regimental title that appeared at the end of the 3rd century: Bishop/Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, p. 202.

weapons. The shape of the spearhead was either narrow-shouldered or broad-shouldered, designed to penetrate and cut.[92]

Procopius very often uses the term *dory* to describe the spear that was "attached" to the heavily-armed horseman of the 6th century.[93] The *Strategikon* also examines the armament of a cavalryman, which included cavalry spears in the "Avar style", distinguished by a leather thong attached in the middle.[94] The spear was the paramount weapon for the infantry of the period as well, with the aforementioned manual instructing the general to fill the first two lines of the infantry formation and the last one with spearmen (*κοντάτους*).[95] It is worth noting that the provision of the *Strategikon* to keep a spearman in the last line of the infantry formation might have been intended to guard against the encircling manoeuvres of the steppe warriors – a precursor of the same provision described for the hollow infantry square of the 10th century.

The *kontarion* is normally translated as a spear/lance, but there are references in the sources where it might also be translated as a heavy cavalry javelin.[96] The primary sources make a clear distinction between the longer lances of the cavalry and the shorter infantry spears.[97] There is a possibility to reconstruct the length of the Byzantine spear based on the evidence from the 10th-century military treatises and several iconographical depictions of military saints holding it. The *Sylloge Tacticorum* and the *Tactica* prescribe the dimensions of the *kontarion* as between 8-10 cubits (3.5-4.6 m), while the *Praecepta Militaria* notes the –rather unlikely according to McGeer – length of *c*. 25-30 spans (5.8-7 m).[98] Artistic evidence from iconographies can vary significantly, bearing in mind that the spears may have been depicted considerably shorter in length for artistic reasons (i.e. lack of space). The majority of them would have been around 1.5-1.6 metres long, fewer would have been between 2

92 Bishop/Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, pp. 151-52, figs. 92-93.

93 Procopius, *Wars*, I, i.9-15, pp. 6-7.

94 *Maurisce's Strategikon*, I. 2, p. 12.

95 Ibid., II. 8, p. 29.

96 Ibid., I. 2, p. 12. Copied in: Leo VI Tactica VI 6, ed. Dennis, p. 84.

97 For example: *Maurisce's Strategikon*, XII. B. 20, pp. 152-53; Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, IV 6, VI 10, VII 8, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, pp. 135, 189, 224 (Dawes, pp. 78, 110, 131); Leo the Deacon, ed. Hase, p. 143 (Talbot/Sullivan, p. 188) (*κόντους επιμήκεις*). Tsamakda, figs. 4-7, 11, 19, 69, 72, 75, 128-129, 133, 141-143, 145, 177-180, 195, 208-210, 260, 326, 542, 545, 548-549, 551, 553-554. See also: Babuin, *Όπλα*, pp. 116-18.

98 *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 38.3, 39.1, ed. Dain, pp. 59, 61; Leo VI Tactica, V 2, ed. Dennis, p. 74; *Praecepta Militaria*, I. 29-31, ed. McGeer, p. 14.

and 2.5 metres, while the depiction of Byzantine spears longer than 3 metres is very rare.[99]

4.5 *Javelins*

According to Vegetius, the Late Roman hand-thrown shafted weapon identified as the *speculum* was a type of javelin consisting of a shaft 5.5 Roman feet long (1.628 mm) and a metal head 9 Roman inches long (200 mm).[100] A second type of light javelin was the so-called *verutum*, which the same author describes as consisting of a shaft some 3.5 Roman feet long (1.03 m) that had a head of 9 Roman inches (200 mm). A third type of missile weapon, more like a throwing dart than a javelin, is identified by Vegetius as the *plumbata* or *mattiobarbuli*.[101] Evidence from archaeological findings of *plumbatae* in the British Isles, the Danube and the Rhine has helped experimental archaeology to reconstruct and test a great number of these. They would probably have been less than one metre long, with a head averaging between 100 and 200 mm,[102] and the tactical role of these units would have been to "soften-up" the enemy defences prior to any attack.

The late 6th century *Strategikon* assigns the *verutum* (*βηρύτταν*) and the *mattiobarbuli* (*μαρτζοβάρβουλα*) to the unit of the light-infantry, highlighting the Slavic influence over the design of the former, while the *μαρτζοβάρβουλα* would also have been a weapon of the heavy infantry, handed out to the soldiers of the first rank.[103] In the treatises of the 10th century, the *ακόντιον* is identified as the weapon of the *πελτασταί* and the *ψιλοί* – the light-infantry units of the army – and of the light-cavalry units, which were supposed to carry two or three each.[104] Its maximum length is prescribed to 12 spans (2.76 metres).

The *Sylloge Tacticorum* is the first of the military treatises that mentions a new unit that was created around the early 10th century, the infantry corps of the *menavlatoi*. Their primary weapon was the *menavlion,*[105] (*Latin venabulum*)[106] identified as a heavy javelin or spear designed for thrusting rather than

99 Babuin, *Ὅπλα*, pp. 116-17.

100 Vegetius, II. 15, p. 47.

101 Vegetius, I. 17, pp. 16-17.

102 Conyard, "Late Roman Army," II, p. 542; Bishop/Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, p. 200.

103 *Maurice's Strategikon*, XII. B. 4 and 5, p. 139.

104 *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 38.6-8, 39.8, ed. Dain, pp. 60, 62; *Praecepta Militaria*, III. 70, ed. McGeer, p. 38.

105 J. Haldon, "Byzantine Military Technology", 32-33; Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 194-95; McGeer, "Μεναύλιον", 53-58; idem, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, pp. 209-11, 267-72; Anastasiadis, "Menavlion", 1-10.

106 Leo VI Tactica, VI 27, IX 71, XI. 22, XIX. 14, ed. Dennis, pp. 96, 182, 204, 508.

casting. This particular type of spear was made of "hard wood (oak, cornel) and just thick enough for hands to wield them".[107] Its shaft had a length of between eight to ten *cubits*, which according to Schilbach works out between 2.7 and 3.6 metres.[108]

The operational role of this unit was to receive the enemy heavy *kataphraktoi*, by kneeling and anchoring the ends of the *menavlia* to the ground, aiming their weapons at an angle against the enemy horses.[109] This newly established unit developed through trial and error throughout the 10th century, clearly reflecting the changes in the Byzantine army's strategies and tactics in the operational theatres in Syria and Mesopotamia. The numbers of the *menavlatoi* were drastically increased – four times more as we read a generation later in the *Praecepta* – working in close cooperation with the rest of the infantry units as a sort of cavalry shield.[110] These developments represent the increase in the use of heavy cavalry units in the aforementioned theatres in the East in the middle of the 10th century.

4.6 *Bows*

The Byzantine archer of the 10th century was equipped with the composite bow introduced during the 4th century by the Huns.[111] The three main components of a composite bow were the wood core with sinew glued to the back and horn applied to the belly. The maximum range of a composite bow could reach some 250 yards (225 metres), although the effective range to penetrate metal armour was reduced to about 100 yards (90 metres).[112] A skilled archer could discharge up to two or three arrows every ten seconds.[113] They could shoot in either the Roman or Persian manner by using either a thumb lock or a finger release, the former adopted from the Huns.[114]

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107 *Praecepta Militaria*, I. 119-121, ed. McGeer, p. 18.

108 There has been a debate over the length of the *menavlion*: Anastasiadis, "Menavlion" 3-4; McGeer, "Μεναύλιον," 54-55; Dawson, "Suntagma Hoplon", p. 83, n. 20; idem, "Fit for the task", 7-10.

109 *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 47.16, ed. Dain p. 89.

110 *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 47.16, ed. Dain, p. 89; *Praecepta Militaria*, I. 83-85, ed. McGeer, p. 16.

111 Coulston, "Roman Archery Equipment", pp. 220-366; Paterson, "The Archers of Islam", 69-87; Klopsteg, *Turkish Archery*; Bivar, "Cavalry Equipment", 271-91, especially pp. 282-87.

112 Bivar, "Cavalry Equipment," 283; Conyard, "Late Roman Army," 11, p. 535; Klopsteg, *Turkish Archery*, p. 20.

113 Babuin, *Όπλα*, p. 175.

114 *Traditional Archery from Six Continents: the Charles E. Grayson Collection*, text by C.E. Grayson, M. French, and M.J. O'Brien, photographs by D.S. Glover, Columbia Missouri 2007, pp. 8-10.

Roman *self-bows* were made of a single material, usually wood, until they were overshadowed by influences from the steppe nomads. Although mounted archery had been in use by people like the Sarmatians, who were in regular contact with the Romans,[115] it was the coming of the Huns to eastern Iran and Europe in the later 4th century that triggered a gradual change in Roman warfare. By the 6th century there would be a new model of cavalryman capable of fighting both with a bow and a lance.[116] This tactical adaptation would be reinforced with the advent of the Avars in the later 6th century and would provide a considerable advantage over the Persians a generation later.[117]

The Byzantine army of the 10th century largely comprised units of lightly armoured, highly mobile infantry and mounted archers due to the predominance of a defensive "guerrilla" strategy.[118] The most significant aspect of this strategy was the "shadowing" and harassing of the enemy invading forces, so that lightly armed troops would have been more suitable for this kind of warfare than heavily armed *kataphraktoi*. Pictorial representations of saints carrying bows are not known in Byzantine lands before the late 12th century.[119] In the hollow infantry square described by Phocas, "proficient" archers make up three out of seven lines of soldiers in each 1000-men taxiarchy (300 in total), fully equipped with two bows and four strings, and two quivers, distinguished between big ones (*κούκουρα μεγάλα*) with 60 arrows and small ones (*κούκουρα μικρά*) with 30 to 40 arrows in total, along with another 50 "imperial arrows" (*βασιλικαί σαγίται*) provided from the imperial warehouses.[120] Mounted archers formed almost a quarter of the triangular *kataphrakt* formation and a quarter of the total cavalry force, themselves armed with bows of "much reduced force" – 15-16 *palaistrai* (1.17-1.25 m) – probably for easier handling of the weapon.[121]

115 Morillo/Black/Lococo, *War in World History,* vol. 1, chapter 6 (*The Nomadic World: Central Asia to 1100*).

116 Procopius, *Wars*, I. i, pp. 5-7; v. xxvii, pp. 259-61; *Maurice's Strategikon*, I. 2, p. 12; II. 8, p. 29. Rance has criticized the way contemporary scholars have interpreted the evidence from that period: "Narses and the Battle of Taginae", 427-43.

117 Bivar, "Cavalry Equipment", 281-86; Luttwak, *Grand Strategy*, pp. 78-83.

118 Theotokis, "Border Fury", pp. 13-24.

119 Heath, *Byzantine Armies*; Parani, *Religious Iconography*, p. 142; Babuin, *Ὅπλα*, p. 161; Nicolle, *Arms & Armour*, fig. 45.

120 *Praecepta Militaria*, I. 34-36, I. 137-140, ed. McGeer pp. 14, 20.

121 *Praecepta Militaria*, I. 46-53, IV. 1-59, ed. McGeer, pp. 36, 38-42; *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 39.4, ed. Dain, p. 61.

Infantry soldiers may also have employed the *solenarion*, a type of an arrow-guide, being a channelled tube used to shoot short bolts very rapidly.[122] It appears in the *Strategikon* as one of the arms of the *ψιλοί* and it is another indication of the Byzantine adoption of steppe weapons into their armoury.[123] The crossbow was also known since the late Roman times, as Vegetius refers to the *arcuballistra* as a weapon used for the defence of a city.[124] It seems to have disappeared from the sources in the early Byzantine period, only to re-appear in the 10th century under the term *cheirotoxobolistra*, a hand-held ballistra, which was hand-spanned but not hand-held, and also in the 11th century under the term *tzagra*.[125]

4.7 *Lasso*

A relatively neglected weapon – in terms of modern study – that found its way into the Byzantine army's equipment was the lasso. The noun *σώκος* and the verb *σωκίζειν* are quite rare and only attested in written sources fewer than ten times until the 9th century.[126] Perhaps the most prominent incident in Byzantine military history regarding the use of a lasso in battle was at Markelai in 792, when the emperor Constantine VI was allegedly lassoed by the Bulgars.[127] Historians may be tempted to attribute the adoption of the lasso to steppe influence,[128] but the lasso was already known around the area of the eastern

122 Haldon, "*Solenarion*", 155-58.

123 *Maurice's Strategikon*, XII. B. 5, p. 139.

124 Vegetius, IV. 22, pp. 133-34; Conyard, "Late Roman Army," II, p. 540.

125 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 670; Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, X 8, ed. Reisch/Kambylis, p. 305 (Dawes, p. 255); Haldon, *Warfare*, pp. 135-36; Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 239-53, especially pp. 245-46; Babuin, *Ὅπλα*, pp. 207-27.

126 *Anecdota Græca*, e codd. MSS. Bibliothecæ regiæ Parisiensis, J.A. Cramer (ed.) (2 vols.), Oxford 1839, II. p. 309; Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn, p. 364. Malalas notes another battle-scene between Roman and "Hun" troops where the latter *εσόκευσαν* their opponents: ibid., p. 438. Theophanes mentions the capture of Constantine, the *magister militum per Thracias*, by the Bulgars using a lasso in 538/9: Mango/Scot, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, p. 317; Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. J. Bidez /G.C. Hansen, *Sozomenus. Kirchengeschichte* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 50), Berlin 1960, VII 26, where Sozomen is using the rare noun *βρόχος* to describe the lassoing of a bishop by a Hun.

127 D. Sullivan has attributed this report to literary invention borrowed from a similar incident described by Theophanes and Malalas; Sullivan, "Was Constantine VI 'Lassoed' at Markelai?", 287-91.

128 Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, trans. G.C. Rolfe (3 vols.), London 1985, vol. III, 31.2.9, p. 385.

Mediterranean and the Black Sea since the 5th century BC.[129] In Sassanid Persia, the martial equipment of a heavily-armed horseman also included a lasso (*kamand*),[130] and the late 10th century epic poem *Shahnameh* (*c.* 977-1010) makes it clear that the *kamand* was considered useful for livestock, handling, hunting, and warfare.[131] Few pictorial representations of its use in the Imperial army have been preserved,[132] and the only evidence we have of Byzantine soldiers using the lasso comes from the *Strategikon* and the Cypriot epic poem *Άσμα Του Θεοφυλάκτου* (8th-10th centuries).[133]

5 Defensive Equipment

5.1 *Shields*

The curved rectangular body-shield of the Antonine period remained in use until the mid-3rd century, when circular shields appear more often on gravestones and triumphal monuments of the pre-Diocletian period.[134] These circular shields may have been adopted from the Germanic or Danubian peoples, but they were already in use by the *auxilia* since the 1st century CE.[135] The surviving oval shields from Dura-Europos, ranging between 107-118 cm in length and 92-97 cm in width, probably had their faces covered in linen, leather, rawhide or parchment – in addition to paint – to avoid the breakdown of the laminated plywood in humid conditions.[136] Planked construction in the Dominate period eventually replaced laminated plywood, which made the use of the aforementioned materials as cover effectively redundant.

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129 Herodotus on the Scythians: *The Histories*, 7.85. Pausanias on the Sarmatians: *Description of Greece*, 1.21.5.

130 A. Sh. Shahbazi, "Army i. Pre-Islamic Iran," *Encyclopædia Iranica,* Vol. II, Fasc. 5, pp. 489-99.

131 Gulchin, "Literary Translation", 131-33.

132 Bienkowsky, *The Art of Jordan*, p. 112.

133 *Λωρόσοκκα* [trans. *strong thongs*]: *Maurice's Strategikon*, I. 2, p. 13; Leo VI Tactica, V 3, ed. Dennis, p. 75. The anonymous author of the epic poem used the rare noun *βροχόλουρα* [trans. *snare* or *noose*]: Sakellariou-Agiopetritou, *Τα Κυπριακά,* pp. 9-11, verses 35-48.

134 Bishop/Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, pp. 179-82; Espèrandieu, *Gaule romaine*, no. 4300; Coulston, "Later Roman Armour", fig. 4; Laubscher, *Der Reliefschmuck der Galeriusbogens in Thessaloniki*, pls. 30-34, 36 and 65.

135 Coulston, "Recreating the Late Roman Army", pp. 475-76; Conyard, "Late Roman Army", p. 532; Kazanski, "Barbarian Military Equipment", p. 501.

136 James, *Excavations at Dura-Europos*, pp. 159-87; Jørgensen/Storgaard/Thomsen, *The Spoils of Victory*, p. 322; Southern/Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, p. 99.

The most common type until the end of the 11th century was the circular shield, although oval shields do also appear regularly. These were largely made of wood, although references to other materials like hardened leather and iron or even gold – apparently for ceremonial purposes – can be found in the sources.[137] The military treatises specify the shape and dimensions of the various shields in use. According to Leo's *Tactica*, one can distinguish between: (a) "regular shields" (*σκουτάρια*) (b) "larger ones called thyreoi" (*σκουτάρια μεγάλα, ἅπερ λέγονται θυρεοί*), and (c) "other small shields, formerly called peltasts" for the light infantry (*ἕτερα σκουταρίσκια τῶν πεζῶν τὰ πότε λεγόμενα πέλται*).[138] Phocas adds to them by noting that the foot archers should be armed with "small handheld shields" (*σκουτάρια μικρά, χεροσκούταρα*).[139] Larger oval shields (*σκουτάρια ἐπιμήκη μεγάλα – "θυρεοί"*) were carried in battle by the cavalry of the *kataphraktoi*, while the round version (*στρογγύλον τέλειον*) of this shield was prescribed to the infantry *skoutatoi*.[140]

The anonymous treatise *On Strategy* states that the foot soldiers of the front rank should be armed with a shield "no less than 7 spans in diameter", *c.* 1.65 metres that should have been big enough to "form a solid, defensive protection".[141] Later in the 10th century, the *Sylloge Tacticorum* notes that the "rectangular" or "triangular" shields of the infantrymen should be "no less than six spans" (*c.* 1.4 metres), but the author also advises that the cavalry – both heavy and light – should carry somewhat lighter shields of four to five spans (*c.* 92-115 cm), while those of the infantry javeliners should be just three spans (70 cm).[142] Phocas also recommends that the *menavlatoi* and the javeliners should carry "smaller shields than the oplitai", for obvious reasons related to their role in battle.[143]

Round shields are the most common type in military iconography between the 10th and early 11th centuries, and their popularity may be attributed to the

137 On wooden shields: Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 92-93. On leather shields: ibid., pp. 92-93 and n. 34, and p. 126; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 543 (Magoulias, p. 228); Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, ed. Hase, pp. 78, 153 (Talbot/Sullivan, pp. 129, 196). On iron shields: Leo VI Tactica, V 2, XX 188, ed. Dennis, pp. 74, 602. On copper shields used during a siege: *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 53, ed. Dain p. 103. On ceremonial shields: Constantine Prophyrogennitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 576.

138 Leo VI Tactica, V 2, ed. Dennis, p. 74; Kolias, *Waffen*, p. 89.

139 *Praecepta Militaria*, II. 36-37, ed. McGeer, p. 14. See also: *Digenes Akritas*, 2618, p. 173.

140 Leo VI Tactica, VI 21 and 27, Dennis, pp. 92, 96.

141 *On Strategy*, 16, ed. Dennis, p. 52; Kolias, *Waffen*, p. 104. Dawson, "Fit for the task", 2, has raised some objections on the ability of an average-height soldier to fight with such a tall shield.

142 *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 38.1, 6 and 39.1, 8, ed. Dain, pp. 59-62.

143 "Praecepta Militaria," I. 96-97, p. 18.

Empire's Muslim neighbours.[144] Oval shields are depicted more rarely, although they constitute the most common type of representation of Imperial bodyguards in the early Byzantine period.[145] In the mid-11th century, the round shield was gradually superseded in military iconography by a new design that appeared in the West in the same period, the "almond-shaped" shield –rounded at the top and curving down to an acute apex at the bottom.[146] Kolias and Haldon have suggested that it may have developed out of the triangular infantry shield described in the *Sylloge Tacticorum*.[147] A possible ousting of the round shield for the heavy cavalry was completed in the middle of the 12th century, with the appearance of the – probably triangular and concave –[148] shield reaching to the feet which offered almost complete protection to its bearer.[149] Round shields, however, were still widely represented beside the new type of shield.

5.2 *Helmets*

The 3rd century witnessed a typological change in the design and manufacture of Roman helmets, from the 1st century CE bowl-shaped helmet manufactured in one piece, to multi-part bowls.[150] Perhaps due to the expansion of the Roman army of the Dominate and the subsequent mass production of pieces of equipment by the *fabricae*, this simplification in the design and construction of the helmet led to the production of two main types: (a) the "Ridge" helm, and (b) the "Spangenhelm". Vegetius had also recommended a type of round flat-topped cap called *pilleus Pannonicus*, which should have been worn by the soldiers, not just when they were not wearing their helmets but also underneath them as a form of padding and to absorb the sweat.[151]

144 On the "sewn skoutaria" (*σκουτάρια ραπτά*) supplied for the Cretan expedition of 949: Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, I, ed. Reiske, p. 669.

145 Grotowski, *Byzantine Iconography*, pp. 227-30; Parani, *Religious Iconography*, pp. 126-27; Nicolle, *Arms & Armour of the Crusading Era*, figs. 33 F-H.

146 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, XIII 8, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 405 (Dawes, p. 341); Tsamakda, figs. 54, 67, 68, 186.

147 Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 105-8; Haldon, *Warfare*, p. 132, n. 96; Babuin, *Όπλα*, fig. 28.

148 Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 114-17; Grotowski, *Byzantine Iconography*, pp. 234-36.

149 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, 15, ed. Moravcsik, p. 78 [*ἀσπίς ἀνδρομήκης*]; Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meinecke, p. 125. [*ἀσπίς ποδήρης*]; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 31 (Magoulias, p. 14) [*ἀσπίς ἀνδρομήκης*].

150 Bishop/Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, pp. 100-6, 210-16; Coulston, "Recreating the Late Roman Army," p. 470; Glad, "Origine et diffusion", pp. 39, 42-43, 59-60, 97-102; Theocharides, *Υστερορωμαϊκά και Πρωτοβυζαντινά Κράνη*, pp. 477-506.

151 Vegetius, I. 20, p. 22.

The simplest of the aforementioned types was the ridge one, composed of two pieces of metal joined together by a central metallic strip running from the brow to the back of the neck, usually rounded but often having a slightly raised top. It was fitted with neck-guards and cheek-fittings directly attached to the leather lining of the helmet. By the 5th century it had become the standard equipment of both the Roman infantry and cavalry soldiers.[152] Less prominent than the ridge, taller and more conical in design was the spangenhelm, which was composed of several metal panels fitted into an iron frame but generally lacking a fixed neck guard, rather having a curtain of mail, scale, leather or textile attached to the back. The *Spangenhelm* would have been of Central Asian origin, and it remained in widespread use in Byzantium until the 13th century.[153]

According to the military manuals of the 10th century, the heavy cavalry and infantry would have been protected by helmets that would have completely covered the head and face, with just the eyes being left visible (*κόρυθες τέλειαι*).[154] Our sources attest that emperors, like Alexius and Manuel Komnenoi, were wearing such a type of helmet that protected the face with a mail curtain or a visor and would have left only the eyes uncovered.[155] Attached neck protection (*περιτραχήλια*) would have included pieces of fabric, hanging leather strips and/or a mail hood.[156] Less expensive headgear would have been prescribed for the lightly armed infantry javeliners (*κόρυθες ἀσκεπές ἔχουσαι τὸ πρόσωπον*) and the mounted archers (*κόρυθας μὴ τελείας*), who would have carried helmets that left the face uncovered.[157] Finally, a type of helmet that would not have afforded any additional protection to the brow and back of the neck was prescribed to the mounted javeliners (*κόρυθας ἀσκεπεὶς τῶ κύκλῳ*).[158]

152 Conyard, "Late Roman Army," pp. 525-27.

153 Bishop/Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, pp. 142-44, fig. 87.4, and pp. 210-14, fig. 135. Vogt, *Spangenhelme*; Glad, "Origine et diffusion", pp. 45-51, 60-62, 104-14; Nicolle, "Arms and Armour," 308-9 and figs. 8b and 8c; idem, *Arms & Armour of the Crusading Era*, figs. 5 A-B, 6 A-B, 17 A.

154 *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 38.5 and 39.3, ed. Dain, pp. 59, 61; *Praecepta Militaria*, III. 34, ed. McGeer, p. 36; Leo VI Tactica, V 3, ed. Dennis, p. 74 [*κασσίδας τελείας*].

155 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, I 5, IV 6, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, pp. 23, 135 (Dawes, pp. 13, 78); Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, p. 122 (Magoulias, p. 54); Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meinecke, p. 112.

156 *Maurice's Strategikon*, I. 2, p. 12; Leo VI Tactica, V 3, ed. Dennis, p. 76. There is a significant difference between the two descriptions: the *Tactica* refer to mail collars, while the *Strategikon* to neck pieces of the "Avars."

157 *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 38.6 and 39.9, ed. Dain, pp. 60, 62.

158 Idbid, 39.8, p. 62.

The material from which these helmets would have been manufactured would almost certainly have been iron.[159] But when, for example, it was too expensive to provide the entire infantry with iron helmets, then the ones in the middle ranks were given thick caps made of felt (*καμελαύκια*).[160] They would have been fastened over the foot soldiers' heads with bands of cloth (*ἐπάνω αὐτῶν ὑπὸ φακιολίων κρατείσθαι*).[161] This kind of turban would have been the only protection of the head prescribed to the entire infantry formation, an indication of the scaling-down of the army expenses in a period following the wars of the (re)conquest (*c.* 969). This type of headgear is much more common in Byzantine iconography than the helmets with a face mail curtain, which were scarcely represented in Byzantine art, mainly in the 14th century.[162]

Finally, a revival of old traditions in design and manufacture would take place in the 12th century with the reappearance of the one-piece helmet – an early form of a "kettle-hat" with a pointed brim covering the entire face but still lacking a nasal bar, a development which had its parallels in western Europe (i.e. the Bayeaux Tapestry).[163] This revival was based upon the aggressive strategies of the Byzantine emperors of the 10th century, with the increasing tactical role played by heavy cavalry with their lances and almond-shaped shields.

5.3 *Armour*

The *squama* of the Romans was a type of scale armour made of small scales, made of iron, bronze, bone, wood, horn, or leather sewn to a fabric backing. These were pierced on top and laced together and then laced onto a backing garment, usually with the upper scales overlapping the lower ones by about a third. The main difference between scale and standard lamellar armour is that the latter was designed with the rows of – mostly rectangular –[164] plates called *lamellae* overlapping upwards and attached to each other by leather thongs,

159 Leo VI Tactica, VI 2, ed. Dennis, p. 82; *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 39.3, ed. Dain, p. 61; *Praecepta Militaria*, III. 34, ed. McGeer, p. 36; Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, I 5, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 23 (Dawes, p. 11). For ceremonial golden helmets: Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 505.

160 *On Strategy*, 16, ed. Dennis, p. 54; Kolias, "Kamelaukion", 493-502.

161 *Praecepta Militaria*, I. 23-24, ed. McGeer, pp. 12-14; *Digenes Akritas* (897, p. 59) (2001, p. 131) (3177, p. 207); Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 85-87. On ceremonial golden-weaved *φακιόλιον*: Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 500.

162 Parani, *Religious Iconography*, p. 124; Babuin, *Ὅπλα*, figs. 700 (cavalry); 475 (infantry).

163 Nicolle, "Arms and Armour", 310-11, especially fig. 36d; Dawson, *Byzantine Infantryman*, p. 21. For the developments in the West: Oakeshott, *The Archaeology of Weapons*, pp. 286-88.

164 Tsurtsumia, "Splint Armour", 69.

forming horizontal rows but without the need for leather backing.[165] In Rome, scale had been valued since the 8th century BC and its popularity in the Imperial period would have been the result of the Roman conflicts with the Parthian *clibanarii*.[166] Lamellar, on the other hand, although already in use in the Roman army since the 3rd century, only began to gain ground in Byzantium after the later 6th century, owing to contacts with the Sassanids, the Huns and the Avars.[167]

Byzantine written sources offer us a variety of terms to describe body armour: *θώραξ*, *ζάβα*, *λωρίκιον* and *κλιβάνιον*. But since the authors have been using these terms interchangeably, even employing the classicizing *θώραξ*, it is the addition of an adjective following the terms that can give us a clearer idea of the exact nature of the armour and its manufacture: *φολιδωτόν* (from *φολίδες*, Anc. Greek for scales of horn), *ψιλόν* (soft, made of felt or leather) and/or *νευρικόν* (soft, made of hardened leather or coarse silk, cotton and felt) and *ἀλυσιδωτόν* (made of chain).

In the late 6th century *Strategikon*, the author described the armour of a cavalryman as a "hooded coat of mail reaching to his ankle".[168] The *zaba* and the *lorikion* – Latin *lorica*[169] –appear to have a similar meaning in the sources of the 6th and 7th centuries, identified as a type of mail cuirass for the main defence of the soldier, along with a retracted mail hood.[170] Procopius' armoured cavalryman was also protected with a breastplate or corselet.[171] The armour of the infantry consisted of *zabai*, but if all the soldiers were not able to afford to have metal armour, then the first two lines and the last should be armed with it; the rest would have to do with coats of armour made of felt or leather.[172]

As warfare became more localised after the middle of the 7th century and the emphasis was now more on lightly armed troops equipped for the annual incursions rather than fighting pitched battles, the trend seems to have been to

165 Bugarski, "Lamellar Armours", 161-79.

166 Robinson, *The Armour of Imperial Rome*, pp. 153-61; James, *Dura-Europos*, pp. 111-13, 120-22. On the Roman-Parthian contacts: Bivar, "Cavalry Equipment," 278-79; Kolias, *Waffen*, p. 40; Hoffmeyer, "Military Equipment", pp. 55-60.

167 Haldon, "Military Technology," 15, 20; Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 38-40; Southern/Dixon, *Late Roman Army*, p. 43.

168 *Maurice's Strategikon*, I. 2, p. 12.

169 Vegetius, I. 16, p. 16; I. 20, p. 19.

170 Justinian, *Novellae*, ed. Schöll/Kroll, 85, c. 4 (539 CE); Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 37-38, 40-44; Haldon, "Military Technology," 19-21, 24-25.

171 Procopius, *Wars*, I. i, 12, p. 6.

172 *Maurice's Strategikon*, B. 4, p. 139; *On Strategy*, 16, ed. Dennis, p. 54.

move towards lighter equipment.[173] The *klibanion* was a relatively "new" type of armour for the Byzantines, only achieving popularity at the turn of the 10th century.[174] The sources do not define the form of the *klibanion* explicitly, but "light and agile" *klibania* were prescribed by Phocas to the light cavalry of the *prokoursatores*, probably sleeveless and waist-long, while the *kataphrakts* should have worn *klibania* with sleeves and *kremasmata* (padded and quilted skirts).[175] The *klibanion* would have meant anything made of lamellar, a theory supported by Kolias and Dawson.[176] The 10th and 11th centuries also experienced a radical change in the design of lamellar armour, with the *lamellae* not overlapping but rather being attached to the leather underneath.[177]

Scale armour in the form of a thigh-long shirt was also popular in the Middle Byzantine period. Anna Komnene's *φολιδωτὴς θώραξ* probably refers to scale armour, along with references by Choniates to *στολὰς φολίσι σιδηραὶς ὑφαντάς*.[178] Parani notes a number of plates found in excavations at the Great Palace in Istanbul; more pieces have been found in Bulgaria and Skopje,[179] while there is a rich pool of pictorial evidence from 10th and 11th century Cappadocian churches depicting scale and lamellar armour in detail.[180]

The overall form of mail armour is very similar to scale – a thigh-long shirt with sleeves reaching down to the elbow. It is made up of alternating rows of punched and riveted rings of some 3-9 mm in size, each one fastened to four others to form some sort of "net".[181] The earliest indication of its appearance in the Roman world comes from the 3rd century BC,[182] while it became the standard military equipment of Roman and Sassanid troops around the 4th century CE.[183]

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173 *Ecloga,* trans. E.H. Freshfield, Cambridge 1925, XVI. 2, pp. 101-2.

174 Haldon, "Military Technology," 27.

175 *Praecepta Militaria*, II 20 [prokoursatores], III. 65 [mounted archers], III. 27-33 [kataphraktoi], ed. McGeer pp. 22, 34, 36. See also: Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 670. Leo VI identifies the klibanion with the thorax: Leo VI Tactica, VI 4, ed. Dennis p. 86. The *DAI* clearly differentiates between the two: Constantine Prophyrogennitus, *De administrando imperio*, 15, ed. Moravscik, p. 78.

176 Dawson, "Equipment", 42; Kolias, *Waffen*, p. 46.

177 Dawson, "Equipment", 42-46.

178 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, X 8 and 9, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, pp. 306, 310 (Dawes, pp. 181, 183). Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, pp. 203, 258 (Magoulias, pp. 89, 111).

179 Yotov, *Въоръжението*, pp. 120-29 and pls. 62-65; D'Amato, *Varangian Guard*, pp. 10, 54.

180 Parani, *Religious Iconography*, pp. 105-11 and pls. 110-22; Grotowski, *Byzantine Iconography*, pp. 135-51.

181 Conyard, "Late Roman Army," p. 529.

182 Polybius, *Histories*, trans. W.R. Paton, Cambridge MA. 1929, VI. 23, p. 320.

183 Bivar, "Cavalry Equipment," 276-79.

Leo VI refers to *lorikia* reaching "down to the ankles that can be caught up with straps and rings ... If possible, the armour should be made completely of chain mail, but if not, some of it may be of horn or dry cowhide".[184] This type of chain-mail armour is recommended by the author of the *Sylloge* for the heavy infantry and the javeliners, and he also copies Leo's description of chain mail for the cavalry of the *kataphraktoi*.[185] Unfortunately, there is very little archaeological evidence for the use of mail in Byzantium, while this type of armour is very rarely represented in Byzantine art of the 11th century – this could also be an indication of the greatest popularity of lamellar in this period.[186] This attitude changed in the 12th century, however, with images of chain mail increasing dramatically, probably due to the influence of western troops.[187]

As metal armour would have been expensive and difficult to acquire for the bulk of the provincial troops, rather, padded or quilted soft armour (*λωρίκια ψιλά*) would have been the norm.[188] A type of garment resembling a coat made of padded cotton opening in the centre front was the *kabadion*.[189] There were two types of *kabadia*: (a) for the infantry, reaching down to the knees, with long detachable sleeves split between the elbow and the wrist, and (b) for the horse-archers, offering protection from the waist down to the lower part of the archer's body and part of the horse.[190] Byzantine iconography portrays armour to be worn over an ordinary knee-length tunic, like the examples of Joshua, St. Theodore Stratelates, and St. Demetrios from Hosios Loukas, where the saints

184 Leo VI Tactica, V 3, ed. Dennis, p. 74.

185 *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 31.1, 37, 38.7, 39.1, ed. Dain, pp. 52, 59, 60, 61; Constantine Prophyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 670.

186 Parani, *Religious Iconography*, pp. 112-13 and pls. 126, 127. For a mail hauberk *c.* 1070: Nicolle, *Arms & Armour of the Crusading Era*, fig. 27 B.

187 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, XIII 8, ed. Reinsch/Kambylis, p. 405 (Dawes, p. 241); Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, ed. Hase p. 153 (Talbot/Sullivan, p. 196); Dawson, "Equipment," 45. See also: Parani, *Religious Iconography*, p. 114 and pls. 123 and 129; Grotowski, *Byzantine Iconography*, pp. 154-62.

188 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 670 [*κέντουκλα*]; *On Strategy*, 16, ed. Dennis, p. 54 [*ἐκ πίλου και βύρσης συντεθειμέναις*]; Leo VI Tactica, V 3 [*κερατίνης ὕλης* and *βουβαλείων καταξήρων δερμάτων*], XIX 14 [*τα λεγόμενα νευρικά, ἅπερ ἀπὸ διπλὼν κενδούκλων γίνεται*], ed. Dennis, pp. 74, 508. On the etymology of the aforementioned terms: McGeer, Showing the *Dragon's Teeth*, pp. 61, 204-5; Kolias, *Waffen*, pp. 54-55 and n. 136; Dawson, "Kremasmata, Kabadion, Klibanion", 38-42.

189 Grotowski, *Byzantine Iconography*, p. 168.

190 *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 38.4, 38.6, ed. Dain, pp. 59, 60; *Praecepta Militaria*, I. 15-19, III. 68-69, ed. McGeer pp. 12, 36; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 500; *Digenes Akritas*, 2002, p. 131.

appear to be dressed in a type of short-sleeved garment under the cuirass and over the tunic.[191]

Supplementing the *klibanion* were the *manikelia,* the *kremasmata* and the *epilorikon*. Gauntlets and armguards of thick padded silk, cotton, or iron called either *χειρόψελα* or *μανικέλ(λ)ια*, were used to protect the hands and armguards of the heavy infantry and cavalry, while the *ποδόψελα* would have covered the lower legs, forming a sort of tube.[192] The fact that Phocas does not mention the *manikelia* as a complement for the infantry of the post-969 period may suggest the scaling down of the expenses for the army of the period.

The *kremasmata* were a type of short skirt with strips made of leather, silk or cotton to cover the area of the body over the knees.[193] They were attached to the under-armour garment and were the continuation of the old fashioned *pteryges.* This term would have had its roots in the Roman *subarmalis*, a Greek and Roman rectangular piece of leather or linen hanging from the soldier's waist to protect his lower torso, his legs and upper shoulders.[194] In the 11th and 12th centuries, the surface of the kremasmata began to look less like a quilted surface and more like lamellar, according to iconographic evidence.[195]

Over the *klibanion* was worn a sleeveless padded coat, the *epilorikon* or *epanoklibanon*. The purpose of this garment was to protect the soldiers from the elements, while we have evidence that it would also have been used for camouflage.[196] These garments were also important for the adornment of the warrior, with gold-embroidered *epilorika* being part of the victory procession of an emperor according to the *De Cerimoniis*, while in the epic of Digenes Akritas the *epilorikon* was "sprinkled with gold" as a decoration or with griffins and golden lions.[197]

Various types of horse-armour used since the Antonine period typically included protection for the horse's head, neck and breast, described as the "Avar" style: "[they] should have protective pieces of iron armour about their heads and breastplates of iron and felt, or else breast and neck coverings such

191 Parani, *Religious Iconography*, p. 117 and pl. 118.

192 Leo VI Tactica, V 3, ed. Dennis, p. 76; *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 38.5, 39.2, ed. Dain, pp. 59, 61; *Praecepta Militaria*, III. 28, ed. McGeer, p. 34; Parani, *Religious Iconography*, pp. 121-22 and pls. 113, 119-20, 125.

193 Dawson, "Kremasmata, Kabadion, Klibanion", 39, 46-47; Kolias, *Waffen*, p. 47.

194 *Praecepta Militaria*, III. 29, ed. McGeer, p. 34.

195 Nicolle, *Arms & Armour of the Crusading Era*, fig. 26.

196 Leo VI Tactica, V 3, VI 4, ed. Dennis, pp. 74, 84; *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 39.1, ed. Dain, p. 61; *Praecepta Militaria*, III. 31, ed. McGeer, p. 34.

197 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis*, ed. Reiske, p. 500; *Digenes Akritas*, 3197, p. 207 and 3242, p. 211.

as the Avars use".[198] References to style and shape only change in the third quarter of the 10th century when Phocas describes the *kataphraktoi* unit in combat against the Hamdanids of Aleppo, with armour reaching down to the animal's legs: "… pieces of felt and boiled leather fastened together down to the knees so that nothing of the horse's body appears except its eyes and nostrils … or they can have *klibania* made of bison hides over the chest of the horse".[199] The 11th-century Arab poet Mutanabbi gives a very similar and vivid description of a *kataphrakt* charge: "They [Greek and Rus cavalrymen] came against you hauling [such a mass of] iron [armour that it was] as if they crawled on coursers with no legs [to hold them up]".[200]

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198 *Maurices' Strategikon*, I. 2, p. 13. See also: *On Strategy*, 17, ed. Dennis, p. 56; *Sylloge Tacticorum*, 39.6, ed. Dain, p. 62; Leo VI Tactica, V 3, VI 8, ed. Dennis, pp. 76, 84.

199 "Praecepta Militaria," III. 37-45, p. 36.

200 A.A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, Vol. 2, part II (*Extraits des sources arabes*), trans. M. Canard, Brussels 1950, p. 333.

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